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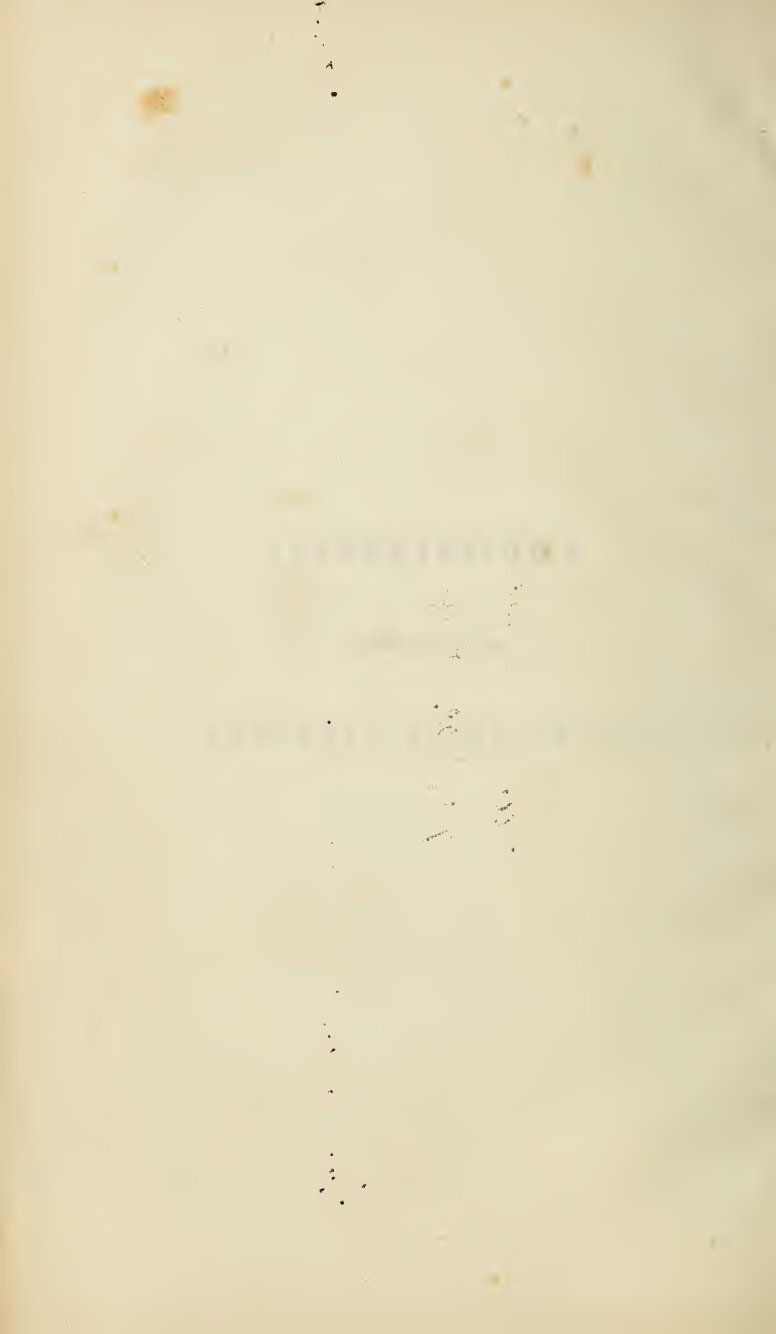




CHRISTIANITY;

AND ITS RELATIONS TO

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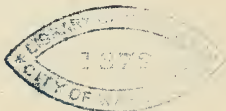
✓ CHRISTIANITY;

AND ITS RELATIONS TO

POETRY AND PHILOSOPHY.

BETWEEN two worlds life hovers like a star,
'Twixt night and morn upon the horizon's verge,
How little do we know that which we are!
How less what we may be! The eternal surge
Of time and tide rolls on, and bears afar
Our bubbles; as the old burst, new emerge,
Lashed from the foam of ages; while the graves
Of empires heave but like some passing waves.

BYRON.



PHILADELPHIA:

J. W. MOORE, 193 CHESTNUT STREET.

1847.

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TO THE
REV. GEORGE HOWE, D.D.
THIS
Volume
IS INSCRIBED,
AS A SLIGHT MARK OF THE VENERATION
AND
PERSONAL REGARD
OF THE
AUTHOR.

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CHRISTIANITY;

AND ITS RELATIONS TO

POETRY AND PHILOSOPHY.

CHAPTER I.

Religious Systems.

THE worship of a Spirit of Power, of whom the visible creation is the outbirth, has its source in the solemn instincts and deepest wants of mankind. The mystery of Life and Death pressed, with a weight of awe, upon the minds of the earliest men. They moved amidst unexplained facts, and wondrous influences. The wide earth, teeming with a varied and mighty vitality, and overarched by the soaring firmament, bore the traces of a great invisible Power. The vastness of Infinity, pregnant with portent and mystery, struggled with the heart, and gave birth to wild curiosity and speculation. The eager efforts of the mind, to solve the problem of existence, ended in the mythological systems of antiquity, which hang on the horizon of tradition, like vast, motionless clouds, in the gray twilight of morning, huge, dim, shapeless, yet skirted with the reflected light of the unrisen sun.

Each variety of form bore the type of its parentage. From the imagination of Asia, sprang an outbirth, like the monsters of its prolific rivers, ponderous, slumberous, and imbued with the beastly lethargy of an intense animal nature.

From the frozen halls of the north issues the old Norse mythology ; quaint, gigantic, shapeless, as the iceberg palaces, and limitless snow-fields of the Frost King. The soft, ardent climate of Greece gave birth to the graceful beauty, the charming ingenuity, the fabled love of the classical mythology. The forest rustled and teemed with the soft-voiced, mystery-breathing dryads. The joyous, girl-eyed nymphs sported in the plash of bubbling fountains, and sought the freighted depths of streams that wound stilly among mossy rocks, in the shady freshness of secluded vales. The ocean, with its vast, sunny surface, hiding stately palaces, plains of golden sand, coral groves, and unfathomed, jewelled grottoes, dwelt under the dripping trident of Neptune, and resounded with wild, mellow sea-notes breathed by the tritons from sonorous shells. The mountains and vales, the groves and winding rivers, the land and the ocean, the air and 'plighted clouds,' were all invested with a lavish life, and peopled with the bright, glancing forms, and eloquent faces, and laughing eyes of their embodied spirits.

The circle of earth was thus seen and peopled. But the up-turned eye also traced appropriate

shapes in the boundless vacancy of Infinity. Infernus and Olympus, the types of the mighty eternity, sprang forth from the shores of the olden imagination; the one stretched under the deathful sceptre of gloomy Dis; the other, bright with the ideal beauty of god-like forms, and pregnant with the awful traditions, and mighty dynasties, and vast fables of an unbeginning, immemorial past.

The felt significance of the visible creation, the solemn tongue of time, the deep, sleepless, ever-urging, ever-pointing instincts of eternity and infinity, begot the varied mythological systems of antiquity, which correspond in ingenuity and poetic interest, with the depth and vivacity of the races, from which they respectively sprang.

At length the burning beams of Revelation broke through the cleft clouds, and shone piercingly and powerfully on the black, working depths of superstition. Judaism arose awfully from the smoke and thunder of Sinai, bearing the assured marks of the Eternal Spirit, pregnant with the authority of His mighty law, and solemnly pointing with the finger of sacrificial rites and prophetic visions to the great fulfilment of Calvary; yet appalling in its chronicles of forewarned doom, of swift destruction, of devouring vengeance, of frightful indistinctness, and all surrounding mystery and terror.

Finally, in the fulness of time came the blaze of the consummate all-sufficient Revelation. In the "beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morn-

ing," Christianity broke upon the world from Mount Calvary, with soft, wide radiance, with Sabbath quietude, and sparkling with the dewiness and freshness of never-ending youth.

It presents the venerable and awful features of the old wondrous systems ; but softened, and, as it were, shaped and humanized by a warm and tender light, the revealed smile of Universal Love. It retains their vastness and grandeur, but shines in addition with the glory of the Most High ; like the twilight clouds, still sublime in their huge quietude, but lighted and gloriously embellished by the burning eye of the up-risen sun. It brings large thoughts of the brooding depths of a past eternity, of the birth of time, of mighty physical and spiritual changes, of pitchy darkness and glorious light, of a frightful past, and of a future fraught with radiance, with boundlessness, with deep stirring speechless thoughts, and a wide joyfulness of love. The first was heaven, viewed by the naked eye at a vast distance, through shadowy and distorting clouds, huge, wondrous, and misty ; the other is heaven brought near, in its blue tranquillity and sublime repose, seen in the beauty of its holiness, the awe and majesty of its glory, and the warmth of its all-embracing tenderness, by the strong loving eye of faith.

In addition to its deep, poetic, and philosophical interest as an object of speculative thought, the distinguishing nobleness of Christianity consists in

its ineffably lofty purpose; which is, to bring the human soul into the likeness of God. It is the inestimable privilege and high destiny of the "children of light," to grow into the image of the Eternal Spirit, who sits on the throne of the universe, and from the fulness of whose beauty, and power, and love, came forth the teeming fabric of nature. To accomplish this beneficent work, a heavenly influence is implanted in the heart, which, from its central hold, begins to institute a transforming process upon the whole nature. The regenerative agency breaks up the natural darkness of the soul, and reveals it in the serene and powerful light of the Sun of Righteousness. The work of sanctification deepens and widens as it advances. A healthful, healing principle of order operates with searching, silent power, dissolving forced combinations, and uniting the elements of character, according to just and lasting affinities. The former abode of darkness and strange shapes, becomes the home of light, and of all beautiful and graceful forms; its broken structure is repaired, and its fallen columns erected into a lovely temple, in which the Holy Spirit dwells and reigns for ever. The traits and attributes of the soul gradually put on the god-like lineaments of the Deity, and grow in purity, and beauty, and power, until the mighty hand of death transplants the spiritual germ to that near blessedness, where the resemblance shall become complete. Christianity comes forth, there-

fore, not only with the speculative grandeur and awe of the vast heathen systems, but all radiant with the light and love of heaven, to accomplish a work too high for the most daring conjecture to have reached, too noble and precious for thought to estimate, or language utter.

The fundamental element in the perfection of the Deity is His self-sufficiency; since without it, whatever might be His nature, there could be no certainty of unchangeable stability. But as man is a dependent being, dependent for life, and breath, and all things, upon a higher power, his perfection must of necessity rest upon a different basis. While Christianity, therefore, tends to bring him to a spiritual likeness with God, it prominently upholds the characteristic distinction of human perfection to consist in its being derived from a source external to itself. It requires the acknowledgment of dependence upon God from man; because, being his true state, it is indispensable to the perfection of his nature. It humbles the soul, in order that it may ennoble and elevate it. It breaks up the stagnant pools of pride, in order that the healing fount of humility may gush forth freely, until the spiritual wilderness rejoices in the luxuriant bloom and beauty of an unfading fertility. It imbues the spirit with lowliness and meekness, in order to gird it with a triple strength of endurance, which temptation and trial may assail with threatening violence, but over which

they can never finally triumph. It destroys the bitter springs of time, in order that the soul may drink of that living water, after which can come no thirst. If it unsparingly exposes the deficiencies of human nature, it is only to furnish an abundant supply. If it shows the darkness which naturally envelopes unregenerate man, it dissipates that darkness by the revealed light of eternity. Is man impotent and sinful? By communion with God, he may derive bestowments of strengthening and purifying influences, "abundantly above all he can ask or need." Is he declared to be poor, and blind, and empty, and miserable, and naked? It is that he may be filled with the "fulness of God." It dispels the idle dream that man can be perfected without a sense of dependence: for how can the perfection come if it be not derived? But then it holds out a fixed hope, an assured certainty of perfection, under the conditions it offers. If the highest happiness and glory of man consist in derivations of power, beauty, wisdom, and love from the unfailing fount, Christianity teaches that its life-giving waters flow freely and openly to all. Hear its mighty voice as it stirs through the universe! "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat: yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price."

As Christianity is the last ray of direct revelation that can be expected to be shed on the path of

life, it must contain the power, if faithfully applied, of conducting man to the highest perfection of his nature. Its fitness for this end is embraced in the general reflection, that while it presents to the mind the grandest truths, it possesses a minuteness and thoroughness of practical efficiency, which shows its adaptedness, as a transforming agent, to deal with the most hidden things of the heart.

CHAPTER II.

Atonement.

THE Atonement of Christ forms the central doctrine of Christianity, the basis upon which it efficiently operates, the condition of its light, its meaning, and its power. Without it, the entire mechanism, now so complete in its parts, so harmonious and perfect in their adjustment, so full of life, and beauty, and strength, would become a worthless and disordered mass, devoid of animation, significance and use.

In the darkness of former ages, the Cross of Christ was beheld with the hootings of scornful skepticism, by a "world lying in wickedness." It is regarded now, by the same world, as an useless absurdity, or an instance of sanguinary cruelty. It is now, as it was then, the stumbling stone of "all them that perish." The blasphemer profanes it, the worldling makes a jest of it, the sensualist glances upon it with stupid incredulity, and the unhumbled religious philosopher regards it with an eye of suspicion and proud contempt, and strives to lose sight of it in the intricate labyrinth of sophistry. But the heart which has been broken in repentance, which has been imbued with the wisdom of gentleness and humility, upon whose long

night has burst the fresh bright morning of God's light, sees in that bloody tree the charter of heavenly liberty, and acknowledges, in that dying face, "Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

The Cross of Christ, in its full aspect of expiation, forms, beyond all doubt, the most sublime and wonderful spectacle ever unfolded to human view. The last great spiritual era, to which Judaism, with its sacrificial offerings, and all races in their dumb, struggling instincts of propitiation, had pointed with solemn significance for long ages, was about to break upon the world, amidst darkness, and agony, and deep wrong.

Against a sky of threatening blackness, stands the stern outline of a Cross, which supports the veiled form of a blameless Saviour. A rabble multitude gather around him, with mocking jeers, and hoots of laughter and scorn. The drooping, wasted victim had claimed to be their king, and even the Son of God. Such arrogance should now be punished with pitiless and murderous contempt. The pangs of crucifixion did not satisfy the demands of outraged justice. Insult was heaped on injury, and every device of fiendish malice was employed to increase the anguish of the sufferer. Screams of mirth arose with every new infliction, and gibes and scoffs passed rapidly from lip to lip, until the multitude reeled with the mad intoxication of blood, around the quivering and bloody sacrifice.

But a deeper woe than man can inflict struggles with the agonized heart of Jesus. The frown of avenging holiness bends awfully over him, and the wrath of Him "whose counsel standeth for ever," is poured out upon him in a torrent of consuming fury. The tortured form withers and droops; and in the black depth of that nameless anguish, the pale lips shriek, "My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me!"

The Cross of Christ reveals a love which was absolutely unconquerable. Consider the stupendous pressure which it sustained from within and without. Around him gathered a lost and fallen race, for whose salvation he had abandoned the deep quietude, and wide love, and high, thrilling joys of the realms of light. From the moment that he commenced his benevolent ministrations, that race had despised and ill-treated him. They had given the lie to his just pretensions, had scorned his words, had dragged him to a trial of cruel mockery, and were now putting him to a dreadful death, amidst contemptuous hootings, and the bitterest taunts.

The best men have received insult and injury from their enemies with mild forbearance, and even returned blessings for curses; but when a being tenderly cherished turns upon his benefactor, a sting enters the heart, and poisons its best affections. Meekness is outraged into stern indignation, or else changes into a pitiless misanthropy.

Cutting ingratitude was poured upon the Saviour, in its worst forms of fiendish malignity. He was assailed with every tormenting persecution. He was spit upon, buffeted, and publicly scourged. He was dragged through the streets of Jerusalem, with a heavy burden, and his exhausted body at length pinned to the cross, and held up to scorn, and stunning, piercing blows, from those who should have loaded him with the highest honours, and regarded him with the fondest adoration of gratitude. When is added to all this, that mysterious gloom, and concentrated, devouring horror of Divine wrath, which language can but mock, and which only can explain the piercing cry of anguish, which burst wildly forth from his God-forsaken heart, would it have been wonderful if even his strong love had yielded to the stupendous pressure? Would it have been wonderful, if he had spurned the cross from him, and stood among his persecutors, his form erect and dilated with avenging fury, his patient brow lowering with a frown of wrath, his meek eyes shining like live coals, and with uplifted arm and piercing voice, pouring the blasting anathema of an outraged and infuriated God upon a vile and worthless race? If not wonderful, it would have been more than just, for bare justice would have swept the human rebels to perdition, without furnishing any chance of recovery. It was indeed an awful moment when this accumulation of anguish, from

the malignant ingratitude of man, and the furious vengeance of God, burst in one concentrated tide of affliction upon the strong heart of Jesus. It was a moment which involved the eternal destinies of an entire world. Had Christ yielded to the mighty torrent, which beset him, all hope would have perished upon the earth, and man would have expiated his own offences in a state of fearful and unending misery. But the love of Jesus was indomitable, and, amidst the cruelest agonies of the cross, gave birth to the sublimest words that ever this earth heard, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." And when the vials of the Most High's vengeance were poured out upon him, though nature yielded to the consuming blast, his love still triumphed amidst the indescribable horrors of the second death. His dying breath as it passed from his quivering lips syllabled the pregnant words, "It is finished." The work which he had set himself, in the depth and magnanimity of his unconquerable love, to accomplish, was indeed finished; thenceforth it became a possible thing that man could be saved.

The Cross of Christ still stands out, amidst the spiritual darkness and confusion, as it did then, in the shudder and blackness of recoiling nature, the awful proof of the holiness of God; the solemn pledge of His tenderness and love. The light which it reflects upon the mighty world above, is of a kind the most eloquent and impressive, like

the sunbeams softly lighting the vast and lofty clouds, which would else be wrapt in gloom, it brings deep and speechless thoughts of the immaculate holiness of the Supreme and Infinite Spirit. It rebukes the familiarity which so often utters with irreverence His sacred name, or affects to tell with conceited arrogance what must be required by the Majesty of heaven. It teaches man, that instead of mouthing with unclean lips the attributes of his Creator, and fixing their demands, it becomes him to "be still, and know that the Lord is God;" and that instead of standing idly by the Cross of Christ, and discoursing in the inflated presumption of worldly-wisdom upon its want of use and value, it is his urgent business to cast himself at its foot in deep self-abasement, and cry with repentant sorrow, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

But while the atonement "scattereth the proud in the imagination of their hearts," by revealing the awful holiness of God, it sheds a tender and joyful light upon the riches of His mercy. The acceptance of the great sacrifice, the peaceful sabbath of Christ's resurrection, the tranquil beauty and healing influence of Christianity, are the practical proofs that "God is love."

The tempest and the night are passed away. Christianity breaks softly and radiantly upon the world, with the morn of resurrection. It is made vital by the final atonement, which was offered up

on the altar of Calvary, and it announces the joyful tidings, that heaven has been opened to mankind by a reconciled God. It comes forth to battle against a hardened and despairing race, with weapons of love, and lead them away from the wickedness and wretchedness to which they are blindly wedded. With the gentleness of a tender parent, it turns away the steps from paths of sin and folly. It lifts the downcast eyes aloft; upon the bruised affections, it pours the healing oil of consolation. It purges the putrid heart, and changes its low desires and narrow thoughts for great aspirations and broad views of heaven, and God, and eternity. Upon the whole nature it shines with the wide clear light of the Sun of Righteousness, and prepares it for its lofty heritage above the stars, which was purchased for it by that strong deep love, which all the agonies of the atonement could not subdue.

CHAPTER III.

Regeneration.

REGENERATION is the first great work, performed by a heavenly influence upon the soul, in bringing it into harmony and resemblance with God. It is the bright, rosy morn of that glorious day, which has no end, but shines on, with growing lustre, until merged in the uncreated light of eternity.

When Chaos ruled over the void and formless earth, the shapeless elements were held under the blackness and disorder of night. And so it continued, until the eternal Spirit descended from His immemorial abodes, and moved on the face of the deep. A mighty influence pierced the deadness of the vast abyss. "The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee: they were afraid; the depths also were troubled." Darkness and confusion fled from their ancient seats; "at the voice of His thunder they hasted away." Streams of new glorious light surrounded and embraced the heaving mass; the struggling elements hurried to obey the commanding call, and marshaled themselves into order; the young earth, teeming with Life, bloomed in the freshness and beauty of its virginity.

Regeneration is the same work of order,

wrought by the same divine life-giving agency, upon the spiritual elements of man. Those elements lie profoundly wrapt under the dark discordant reign of Chaos. Groans and muttering curses, and hopeless, helpless cries arise awfully from the black turbulent mass. There is a craving want for light and peace; there is a desperate turning to sense and to the world, and there is, under all, a deep sickening consciousness that their light is false, and their peace hollow. The mystery of Life and Death bears down heavily; there is a hunger and thirst for a vast unknown good, and there is a constant turning to "broken cisterns that can hold no water."

At length the soul awakens, and looks back shuddering upon the past. It seems to have aroused from a long, feverish, frightful dream, in which there is a vague consciousness of having tossed in black, hissing whirlpools; of standing on the scathed verge of yawning abysses, and listening breathlessly to strange, horrid noises issuing from their bottomless depths; of traversing parched deserts, with blistered feet and tongue, with no water, and no shade, and nothing, in the interminable empty prospect, but a continuation of misery. These are the voices and forms of Chaos, these are the woes and deserts of skepticism, these are the deep despairing groans and cries of a heart "without God, and without hope in the world."

The Spirit of God moves on the face of the deep.

Light breaks, like the dawn of morning, over the void. The strange voices are hushed, the terrific shapes have melted away. The all-devouring monster, Despair, has ceased to tear the heart: his hideous visage is no more seen. The waste, howling wilderness has become the "garden of the Lord." Confusion has yielded to a searching pervading principle of order, which silently moulds the soul to the firm precision and graceful beauty of harmony. Its deep troubles, its speechless wants, which no tongue could utter, are swallowed in a "peace which passeth all understanding." The unknown God is, at length, attained, which, once a man "tasteth, his soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for." The eye is fixed not, as formerly, upon the slime and filth of this world, wherein are "things creeping innumerable," both man and beast; but its gaze is raised sublimely aloft, and beyond the blue firmament, above the starry canopy, it sees, in the heavenly abyss, what "it has not entered into the heart of man to conceive."

The soul has now become the temple of the Holy Spirit, made fit for his abode, by his purifying and strengthening influences. And then commences his glorious work of bringing it into the likeness of God, which goes on deeply, silently, joyfully for ever. The sorrows, the temptations, the trials, which once invested life with an atmosphere of gloomy and dismal foreboding, are now

seen by the clear eye of faith to be given, that, in their resistance and endurance, the heart may be strengthened in virtue, and thus be better fitted for its bright inheritance above.

The awful, impenetrable shadows of eternity, the boundlessness of infinity, the mighty, inexplicable secrets of being, surround the view of all with mystery: but with this difference; to the unregenerate it is threatening, portentous, all-devouring; to the purged eye of faith its awful venerableness is pierced and softened by the love of God.

Through much casting-down, through much feebleness, through much affliction and sorrow, through much tender calling and parental help, through much heroic conflict and iron endurance, through many lofty victories and unspeakable joys, the life of God in the soul continues; always advancing, always expanding, often when it seems to grow less, or even when its light, to all human view, seems to have gone out forever. The type becomes more and more distinct. At length death and the grave claim their prey; but the one has lost his sting, and the quietude of the other is broken by no cry of victory. Darkness, fear, menacing gloom, and wo press not on the serene intrepid heart. Before it, solemnly opens the boundless world of eternity, clothed in unutterable beauty and glory. Mighty thoughts, and speechless, soaring aspirations throng together tumultuously. The breath thickens; the last sigh quivers

on the lip; the weakness and sorrows of time are over; the spirit dwells forever among the green pastures and still water of immortality, where, in deep, unending peace, it is perfected in the majestic image of God.

Oh humanity! creature of clay, child of sorrow, heir of God's bosom! Low is your origin, great is your struggle, ineffable is your reward. Arise, then, weary wanderer! gird your loins, take your staff, and go forth upon the long pilgrimage. Turn from this ugly-featured world, and grow God-like in spiritual beauty and strength. Many sweet comforts shall refresh your heart; many glimpses of a beautiful and peaceful country shall brighten your eyes; many cheering shouts of encouragement shall you hear from your stout fellow-travellers; many loving hearts and voices shall soften the rugged way. Resist valiantly, endure patiently, let love be unconquerable by reproach, or injury, or wrong; persevere to the end. Heart cannot conceive, tongue cannot utter your reward. "Henceforth there is laid up for you a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give you."

CHAPTER IV.

Sanctification.

SANCTIFICATION is the progressive transformation of the soul into the likeness of God. It commences with the first dawn of heavenly truth upon the mind, and continues for ever. In this present state of being, it is the result of the daily experience of life, sanctified to the heart by the Holy Spirit. All the conditions and events of individual history, whether of enjoyment or sorrow, of prosperity or adversity, are caused by the active forming principle of order, implanted in the renewed soul, to contribute to this spiritual growth; "for all things work together for good to them that love God."

The sanctification of the soul, then, is not accomplished at once. Being a growth, the result of protracted discipline, it is slow and gradual, almost imperceptible; like the silent germination and expansion of seeds, not appreciable in their separate stages, yet always advancing to a majestic maturity of trunk and foliage.

Regeneration is the being born to a new life: sanctification is the growth in, and adaptation to that life. Man issues from the narrowness and darkness of the womb, into the wide peopled light-

ed world, in a state of infancy, and is, as yet, unfit to take an active part in his new condition. To prepare him for this end, his nature puts on a gradual change into strength and enlargement. In like manner, the renewed man comes forth from the dark womb of sin, a babe in knowledge, and gradually grows to the skill and vigour of spiritual manhood.

In the tender, dewy morning light, in the spiritual elevation and enlargement, in the pure deep peace of the "new birth" there is much of what may be supposed to fill the mind of a happy infant. The heart is surrendered, without suspicion or fear of change, to the novel and thrilling joys of its first love. A clear and serene sky bends over it, from the far blue depths of infinity, making it a luxury to live and gaze up towards heaven. The genial, quiet sunshine paints every object with radiant beauty, and fills the whole view with a trance of bliss; no thought of clouds or storms depresses the buoyancy of the enraptured feelings. In the warmth of new-born gushing thankfulness and love, it seems impossible ever to forget or disobey "the kindest of fathers, and the best of benefactors;" such a conception is viewed with incredulity and horror.

Yet it is reserved for the soul, by the unquestionable evidence of facts, to know its frailty and depravity, and how deep the necessity is for disci-

pline, in order to prepare it to meet God in judgment, and enjoy Him through eternity.

When temptation and trial, pressing heavily and sorely upon the heart, or breathing on it with the honeyed gloze of enticement, drives or leads it into forbidden paths, it sees, in an agony of amazement, how man can sin against light and love. Bruised with shame, broken with grief, harrowed with wild and piercing apprehension, the penitent wrestles with God, in utter urgency of supplication, for pity and pardon. Upon the broken and contrite heart, God sheds the light of mercy, and raises it from its depth of anguish to the joy of renewed forgiveness.

It rises from its humiliation with the sense of conflict. It feels that it is surrounded by spiritual foes, who are strong, and vigilant, and active, and, that even amidst the deep joys which religion bestows, it is appointed unto the Christian to "fight the good fight of faith."

The discipline which man undergoes in preparation for a better state, consists in all the circumstances, whether great or small, whether joyful or afflictive, whether quiet or busy, of his entire life; so that the account of his discipline is the full history of his earthly being. It is as difficult for the soul to bear in constant remembrance its dependence upon God, and to live in spiritual nearness to Him, in the happy abundance and ease of prosperity, as to be patient and humble under the sore

weight of affliction. And it is as difficult to exercise the spirit which was in Christ in the quiet and unobserved walks of life, as when the eyes of others stimulate to inward watchfulness and care. Hence, the most prosperous, as well as the most monotonous, condition of existence may result in as perfect a preparation for eternal life, as the most adverse or the most stirring. He, whose paternal providence overruleth all things wisely and well, and who "tempers the wind to the shorn lamb," knows the wants of each soul, and places it in that state which will best call forth and strengthen the virtues it lacks, or which requires a service especially adapted to its gifts. Many are required simply to exercise a Christlike gentleness, and patience, and charity in the sequestered vales of life ; others, to bear a bold testimony to the truth at the burning stake, or amidst the tortures of the rack. Some are called upon to announce the glad tidings of salvation to the tribes of another hemisphere ; others, to stem the strong tide of corruption, and reform society by the utterance of great, neglected truths. But, notwithstanding what may be the lot or work appointed to the Christian, he is fitted for it by the same great Spirit, and therefore the same result of discipline is effected upon the heart. In every case, equally, the strength of the soul consists in the heart-acknowledgment of its dependence upon God, and in the abundant bestowments derived to it from deep and filial communion with Him.

Life is made up of small things, and, for the most part, of quiet, unobserved things. It is, therefore, in such that the discipline of the Christian, mainly, consists: the man who passes through them with moderation and diligence, has achieved many great, though, perhaps, unpublished victories, and is ripe for eternity. The religion, which does not shed a holy tenderness upon the relations of domestic life, but only appears in public ceremonies and assemblages, is but a canting, hollow form of words; not that spirit-filling, heart-moving acceptance of Christ, which changes and softens the soul, and makes it pour forth streams of love through all the walks of life, whether they be frequented or unnoticed. It is in the uninterrupted stillness of domestic peace, that the Christian gains those supplies of strength from meditation, and communion with the Supreme Spirit, which prepare him to bear his part in more stirring scenes with meekness and moderation. There is a tendency, in times of excitement, to hurry men away on the tide of feeling, and substitute sensations for principles, to produce self-sufficiency, and a "zeal not according to knowledge." The proper safeguard to all inflation of pride, or violence of prejudice, consists in the intimate and profound converse with God, in his word and works, which goes on peaceably in the retirement of every-day life, and which inevitably results in the wisdom of gentleness and humility.

The deep importance of the small and quiet cir-

cumstances of life may be seen, therefore, from the fact that they form, almost exclusively, the ground of spiritual discipline.

The Christian is not made to encounter more of trial and temptation than other men. He enjoys the same measure of prosperity, or bows under the same strokes of affliction, which make up the history of the human race generally. He thinks, feels, and acts, by the same laws as other men. He possesses the same tastes, the same comforts, the same sources of enjoyment. He holds the same relations to his species, the same domestic pleasures, the same civil privileges. The education, which his soul is gradually and silently receiving for a nobler life, does not alter his external condition, or the essential features of his nature. Religion acts upon him as a shaping influence of order, and was thus skilfully framed by Infinite Wisdom to harmonize with all the circumstances and relations of life, not to interrupt and distort them.

Thus, it may be easily conceived, that, of two individuals, of precisely similar external circumstances, and outward history, one may be a Christian, and the other not : one may be undergoing an all-important discipline for eternal life, from the very circumstances, which, to the other, has no such effect. All men encounter trials from gratified or disappointed expectation, from an easy or painful condition, and temptations to do wrong assail all men alike. In what then does the Chris-

tian differ from other men, with respect to the circumstances of life? In the moral purpose and effect of those circumstances, as they relate to the state of his soul. The exercise of virtue, in the ordinary conditions of being in this world, gradually and quietly advances the education of the Christian for a boundless and endless state. Others, placed under the same outward circumstances, yet lacking the inward shaping principle, will finish their course without reaching the inestimable result. In the one case, the prosperous or adverse character of things is received with filial joy, or endured with submissive fortitude, as the dispensation of the "kindest of fathers, and the best of benefactors:" in the other, it is regarded as an ordinary chance of fortune, and thus the moral purpose remains beneath the surface, and is void.

Faith is the principle which gives efficacy and shape to the spiritual growth of the Christian. Without it, man passes through life with as little concern and preparation for the future, as though soul and body perished together at death. With it, the wide scenes of immortality stretch in boundless awe before his view, and he hears the solemn voice of eternity bidding him prepare to enter upon them, and dwell there, in purity and peace, for ever. The word of God is opened to his spiritual sense with vital, authoritative power. He hears of eternal life, and of the "second death," of sin and its doom, of Christ and his salvation; he

hears the thunder of the law, and the persuasive invitations and tender promises of the gospel: he hears and believes. Thenceforth he enters upon a wider and nobler life: "old things are passed away; behold all things are become new." The horizon, which lately bounded his narrow view, has rolled away, infinitely, disclosing to his purged eye the boundless and glorious expanse of eternity. Nature seems painted with a new light, and bursts forth in a novel freshness of beauty. A strange, deep joy thrills through the heart. Wide thoughts rise in the mind, and fill it with ecstasy. Life has a meaning, and breadth, which it never possessed before. The elements of the world, so recently sought after as the chief good, have become "weak and beggarly." Turning from the "lying vanities," which, with the fleeting pleasures of sense, would cheat it of its bright inheritance above, the renewed soul commences that warfare which is crowned with an eternal triumph. The principle by which this change from darkness to light is wrought, and this great and happy victory won, is faith.

The efficiency of faith, in the Christian scheme, need excite no wonder: it only expresses the great, fundamental law of human action. Belief is as indispensable to all the other premeditated acts of man as to those required by religion. Every such act involves, and depends upon it, to such a degree, that it could not be performed without it; for without a belief in the adaptation of certain causes to

certain effects, and the tendency of the thing aimed at, no act can be intelligently accomplished. The degree of belief, exercised in the ordinary affairs of life, varies from the lowest to the highest grade; and, in things of interest, the promptness and vigour of action will invariably be measured by the strength, or feebleness, of the relative conviction.

The capitalist will make little, or no, investment in a speculation of much doubt; but, if an opportunity offers, which he is assuredly convinced will yield great profit to those who embrace it, his whole fortune is immediately put at stake. All his modes of thinking receive a new direction; indifference leaves no trace in his actions; a deep, absorbing earnestness marks the whole man, and every thing comes to be considered, as it relates to the important result: like "the seeker of goodly pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it." A man may pursue his usual avocations, without much appearance of concern, when told of distant danger; but when impending ruin is ready to burst upon him, he flees for refuge with wild urgency of speed. As, in earthly things, the degree of belief involved may be barely sufficient to break the outer crust of indifference, and rest lightly on the surface of thought and feeling: so there may be a faith in revelation, which resides only in the intellect, and produces no practical effects upon the heart. But, as there is in worldly pursuits, a de-

gree of belief, which seizes and absorbs the attention, to the almost total exclusion of every thing else, exercising a controlling influence over every mental and bodily effort: so there may be a degree of faith in revelation, which pierces and kindles the depths of the spirit, bringing the whole nature captive to one commanding object, and giving it an everlasting shape, and colour, and meaning. This constitutes the faith which is unto salvation.

Temptation to do wrong is, in every case, an inducement to sacrifice a future to a present good. However trifling and short-lived may be the pleasure, which sin offers its votaries, it is, nevertheless, an enjoyment of some description, or it could not form an inducement to the mind to forego its eternal interest. Whether it be brief, or grovelling, or only of power to tempt a perverted taste, it must be, in the estimation of the erring heart, a good, or it could exercise no influence over it. As future happiness is eternal, and present pleasures as transient as the mist of morning, it would seem that there could be no hesitation in sacrificing the latter to the former whenever it was requisite to do so. But present pleasures derive their power from the circumstance that they are present, and thus are able, by immediate and urgent appeals to sense, to drown the calm and solemn voice of eternity, in the ears of a thoughtless and wicked race. Thus the future and the present wage a ceaseless conflict in the human heart; and it is in that con-

flict that the soul finds its discipline for eternal life.

The principle, which gives the future a commanding influence over the present, must, clearly, be faith in the revelation which discloses that future, and which may make it as palpable and distinct to the believing soul, as is the living present; for "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." If, therefore, the unseen things, which form the subjects of the representations and promises of the Bible, be assuredly believed to be existing realities, they must, of necessity, influence conduct, by the same law, though certainly to a greater degree, than the transient but palpable pleasures of sense. When the certainty of enjoyment is equal in both cases, the greater good will, as a matter of course, overbalance the less. The end held in view, was to rob the present of that power to enslave and mislead, which it has from the mere fact that it is present: to do so, it was necessary to establish the future distinctly and permanently in the mind; when this is done, the proper effect follows, as a thing of necessary consequence. The absolute necessity of faith to accomplish this work, and, therefore, its important place in the Christian scheme, become evident.

One of the objects, it would seem, for which man was placed in this world, where God and heaven are invisible to the physical eye, is that he should

learn to exercise confidence in the word of his Creator. To this end he is put in a state of natural darkness, and required to go through a long spiritual conflict, where all his light, his power, his peace, and his hope, are made to depend upon faith in God. It was made the grand, fundamental law of preparation for eternity, in all its stages. It runs through the entire earthly career of the Christian, from the time that it first made Christ precious to his soul, through the tenderness and joy of the "new birth," through the rich enjoyments and heroic struggles of his spiritual education, until it was swallowed up in sight of the heavenly inheritance.

Nor is it difficult to conceive why this pre-eminence should be given to faith; on the contrary, its universal importance may be clearly seen, from the constitution of the human mind. It is the only principle, which, in our present state, could give eternity a preponderating influence over time. To bring the mind to this just estimate of things, it involves habits of thoughtfulness and attention, of soberness, and patience, and self-control, which go far to form true spiritual nobleness. Above all, it includes a filial trustfulness of love towards the "kindest of fathers, and the best of benefactors," which so well becomes those who have received from his bountiful hand, both the "life that now is, and that which is to come."

CHAPTER V.

God.

“God is love.”—This sublime fact is exclusively a truth of Revelation. Not only was it unperceived by the naked eye of reason, but it is even opposed to the natural sense of mankind, whether benighted in heathenism, or possessed of merely intellectual Christian enlightenment. The history of Paganism reveals a deep and dreadful belief, that the Supreme Spirit takes pleasure in human suffering; hence, the cruel usages of tearing and rending the body, and subjecting it to the most hideous forms of death, while exulting songs rise from amidst the dying tortures, which has opened to the soul the blessed scenes of immortality. The same gloomy idea prevails in every form of corrupt Christianity. It evolved the seclusion, the fastings, and scourgings of Catholicism. It dwells like an instinct in the heart to make merit out of suffering, and win “heaven, by making earth a hell.”

This horrible conception of the Deity is apparent, not only in the uninstructed heathen, and the misguided zealot of an earlier age, but it also exists in the mind of every unregenerate man, however much enlightened intellectually, in a more or less modified form. As the sublime truth that God is

love, was never known to mankind until disclosed in the Bible, so it is not realized by the heart, until inwardly revealed by the Holy Spirit. It is impossible to be denied with truth that the unrenewed heart regards its Creator more as an arbitrary sovereign, jealous of supreme power, and swift to follow disobedience with crushing retribution, than as the Universal Father, whose wide love stretches over His creatures to bless them.

The views of the Divinity, upon which is grounded the belief, that He is to be appeased by self-imposed pains, arise from the incapacity of unaided nature to solve the problem of life, and death, and suffering. The common necessity for labour, springing from the wants both of body and mind, when resting in habitual inactivity; the varied forms of human misery scattered through the world; the prevalence of sin, with its disgusting filth and actual injuries; and the dark uncertainty which veiled the future in mystery, imparted a gloomy horror to all religious speculation. The eye of mere reason could not divine the purpose of life, or pierce the black shadows beyond it. Destructive agencies, of the most desolating effect, seemed to be let loose upon the world. The plague, the earthquake, the tornado pursued their devouring path on land and sea. Famine and sickness, and poverty, seized the strongest and loveliest forms, and buried them in the corruption of the grave. Ingratitude and wrong seemed to

join with the unchained elements, to embitter the brief period of existence. Beyond all this, the hollow tomb gave forth no voice of hope, no steady ray of another and better life. The cause of this actual, wide-spread pain and uncertainty could not be perceived, and hence arose the gloomy belief, that the sufferings of the human race accorded with the dispositions of the Deity.

Perhaps the most prominent mark of the renewed heart is, that it is brought heartily to believe that God is good. In producing this cordial conviction, the agency of faith is as evident and necessary as in every other act of spiritual Christianity. The imperfections and sufferings of the present life, the mighty "mystery of iniquity," surround the Christian as well as other men. Want and pain often oppress him. He often suffers from unprovoked wrong, and from the defects of his own nature; and it is appointed to him, as to all, to sink into the darkness and corruption of the grave. But though his feeble eye cannot see the vast designs and relations of things, faith enables him to know that infinite wisdom, and goodness, and power, preside over the immense fabric of the universe, and that there is an all-comprehending mind, which embraces the creation in all its length, and breadth, and depth, and conducts every thing harmoniously to the completion of the whole, great purpose. He knows that a sufficient reason exists for every mysterious dispensation; that ir-

regularities of Providence are only apparent, not real; and that a day will come, when every shadow of injustice will melt away from the government of God over the world. He knows that the "light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." And though his body sinks into the silent tomb, he knows that "this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."

Though mighty mystery surrounds, and must ever surround the incomprehensible God, whose ways are unsearchable, and who "worketh all things after the counsel of His own will;" He is revealed to the heart of faith as "the author of every good and perfect gift." The universe is changed from a vast dreary void, to the habitation and realm of an all-filling, wide-reigning Spirit of Light, and Life, and Beauty. The earth no more wanders without purpose through the fields of space, but harmoniously pursues her orbit, in obedience to the design of a mighty will. The revolutions, the struggles and sufferings of mankind are no more the restless fermentations of a moral chaos, but the working elements, out of which an inscrutable but benevolent power is gradually evolving order and happiness. The numberless experiences of joy and sorrow, of success and defeat, which make up the history of individual life, cease to be the vagaries of fortune or chance; they become the dealings of a wise and tender parent,

teaching wisdom to the heart, and preparing it for eternal blessedness. The sceptre is wrung from the aimless hand of accident; his throne is overturned, and his reign forever at an end. A paternal Providence, in whose all-comprehending view nothing is great and nothing small, overrules all things wisely and well, to the completion of His great and beneficent designs. Every object is invested with meaning and purpose, and contributes its tributary stream to the mighty tide, which sets constantly to the great fulfilment. Life ceases to be a dark enigma, bounded by the cradle and the grave. It becomes the preparatory state to an existence without imperfection and without end; and death loses the visage of an all-devouring monster, to become but the stepping stone to an eternity of joy. This is the work of faith triumphing over the darkness, and sorrows, and sins of life, and revealing clearly, vitally, to the renewed heart, that God is love. How altered is the condition of mankind with respect to eternity, by the disclosure of this single truth! Self-imposed sufferings are done away in the atonement devised in wisdom and mercy, and fulfilled in the bloody agonies of Calvary. They become an abomination in the sight of heaven, doing wrong to its love, and all-sufficient grace, and treating with daring skepticism the solemn declaration, "as I live, saith the Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked."

Christianity teaches that heaven is gained not by making earth a hell, but by making it a heaven; a heaven of purity, and peace, and love. It teaches that God rejoices in the happiness of His creatures, and its practical effects show, that He has instituted a religion, which produces and secures that happiness. "For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust."

CHAPTER VI.

“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”

THE Deity has bestowed upon man an instinct to view things as they relate to self. In its healthy and appropriate operation, this principle is of great service, in promoting self-preservation, and in giving vitality and vigour to the play of the mental faculties, as well as forming the probable basis of a consciousness of personal identity. While acting in its proper sphere, it is not only consistent with the humility which belongs to the condition of mankind, but necessary to truthful views of the relations of things, and indispensable, therefore, to the pursuit of the eternal interests of the soul.

But, perhaps, there is no quality of human nature more forcibly tending beyond its legitimate bounds, or more injurious to the entire spiritual structure, when existing in excess. It is not like the passions, acting only at intervals, and, when at rest, leaving the mind to calm reflection, and purposes and plans of self-control; its exercise is, necessarily, nearly constant. From its combination with almost every act of the mind, arises a powerful tendency to excess, which will inevitably become effect, if not met by the strongest counteracting influences.

Egotism may present two very distinct types. First, where it is coupled with a high estimate of self, and a conceit of faultlessness. This is the egotism of coarse natures, and finds its delight in wordy histories of its own perfections and exploits.

The second form is consistent with an humble valuation of self, and may eat out the very substance of the heart, without once escaping from the tongue. It usually springs from keen and undisciplined sensibilities, forcing the mind, from their absorbing interest and pressure, into the habit of referring every thing almost exclusively to personal feeling.

Awakened feeling, as a thing of sensation, attracts the attention of the mind, and fixes it upon itself. If it be not directed by active employment, or novel scenes, or the habitual contemplation of great truths, in all their relations, it will result in a morbid egotism, which may, or may not, be accompanied by a conceited self-estimate, and which may utter itself in self-praising language, or dwell silently, perhaps, even unconsciously, in the heart. Hence hypochondriacs are led by their bodily ailments to attach undue importance to their sensations. Men of keen sensibilities, or of indolent minds, are apt to become egotists. And even uninformed Christians, by supposing religion to consist in passing feelings, get in the intellectual habit of referring every subject exclusively to them.

The injury wrought upon the mind by egotism

of thought, results from the one-sidedness of view, which it produces. This is the primary link in its long chain of evils. The egotist not only views things in their relation to self, which every one can, and must unavoidably, do, but he gets into the habit of viewing them only in that relation, and it necessarily follows that he estimates them accordingly. His range of vision becomes narrowed, therefore, to the little world of self, and the objects come to his eye distorted out of their natural dimensions and value: inasmuch as he regards them not in their just proportions, but only on that side which is next to him.

It was remarked by the most celebrated reviewer of the day, of a popular epistolary writer, that his mind seemed constructed to view small things as great, and great things as small. This is the necessary effect of egotism. Things which pertain to self, however insignificant in themselves, are magnified to an undue importance; and, by the same principle, those objects which have this relation in a less degree, however great and noble in the abstract, dwindle to comparative nothingness.

The narrowness and obliquity of mind, brought about by egotism, is abundantly evident, in all the walks and pursuits of life. How apt is the man, who has accumulated the comforts of wealth, by exclusive devotion to a particular line of business, and whose mind has not been enlarged in propor-

tion to his purse, to look with a sort of contempt upon every other occupation. His house, his land, his children, are all prodigies of excellence, and, himself, the greatest prodigy of all. Those of mankind who differ with his opinions, as to the true ends of life, and the means of pursuing them, cannot be understood, excepting as misguided foolish people. A man's profession will almost inevitably stand, as a false visual medium, before his mental eye. How apt is the lawyer to regard his fellow-man, almost exclusively, in the relation of client, or no client; the physician, in that of patient; the clergyman, in that of church-member; the politician, in that of partisan, and so with every other pursuit. An entire community may look out at the great world through the spectacles of ancient, but false, conventionalities, and sagely measure it by its standard of antiquated provincialism. Even nations will estimate each other's whole genius, and character, and institutions by the complexion of certain past events, of a repugnant nature, in their international history. Questions of strong sectional interest will often distort the aspect of things, with which they have but an accidental connection. In short, nothing is more widely-spread, through all the grades and pursuits of life, than this one-sided obliquity of mental vision, which proceeds from the distorting influence of self. It may, or may not, exist with a malicious and bitter spirit. It may be, as it often is,

accompanied by great good-nature, and kindly feeling to mankind generally. The heart may be warm with the most genial affections, and yet the mind may estimate men and things by this false and narrow rule.

The obvious tendency of egotism, however, when carried fully out, leads to the hardest prejudice, and the bitterest bigotry. By producing a perfection of one-sidedness, it disqualifies the mind from conceiving, that it is possibly in error, and that others, of different views, may, after all, hold the truth. The egotist is unable to estimate the peculiar features of other situations than his own. He cannot conceive that men of diverse education must, unavoidably, see objects in various lights. He makes no allowances for circumstances or constitutional differences. He has but one rule by which to judge, and that is, himself. This standard he applies in all cases, and every thing must stand or fall by it.

It has been remarked, with profound truth, of Lord Byron, that the personages presented in his writings, lack dramatic variety and fidelity, from his absorbing egotism. This, however consistent with the lyrical passion, and philosophical depth of his poetry, unavoidably led him to shape his heroes in the mould of his own bitter and burning nature. His fierce egotism effectually centered him upon himself, and destroyed the ability to enter the minds of others; which was necessary in

order to forcibly conceive, and truthfully depict the varied modifications of human character. The same principle holds, with respect to uncharitableness, which is only a result of unyielding prejudice, and this, as has been already stated, grows from the one sidedness of egotism.

If man could but lose sight of himself, and enter into the situation of others, balancing the pressure of temptation with educational, and, perhaps, constitutional defects, how soon might bitter condemnation be exchanged for lenient forbearance, or even extenuation. If the strong conflicts, and virtuous resolutions of the erring could be laid before his eye, and that eye turn with impartial justice to the page of his own heart, and read there the records of his own weakness and guilt, how quickly might he recognize the object of his critical censure for a brother, and learn to regard him with the tenderness of fraternal sympathy. But while his vision is keen to detect the mote in the eye of another, self stands in his way, and prevents him from seeing the beam which clouds and distorts his own. The masterly analysis of evangelical charity, furnished by St. Paul, which separates it into its constituent parts, with the most accurate fidelity, shows how much the exercise of that greatest Christian virtue depends upon the estimate of self—"Charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up."

When carried out to an excessive degree, egot-

ism results in a weak, and superficial condition of the mind. Having produced and confirmed the habit of viewing objects of thought only upon one side, it at length destroys the capacity of conceiving things as they really are. The mind loses truthfulness of perception, and breath and depth of thought. Shallowness and weakness ensue, which, in their turn, react upon egotism, degrading it still lower, until interest is felt only in matters of the most immediate concern. This is its lowest form; and, in this state, it is but slightly removed above the debasement of sensualism. The future, the glorious future, pregnant with mighty truths, with momentous events, with vast objects, with wide, and solemn light, without limit or end, becomes an immense stagnant sea, lying in dead barrenness over the dreary expanse of eternity: the present, with its petty interests, its paltry rivalries, its sordid cares and fleeting pleasures, has won the bright inheritance of the soul with a worthless mess of pottage.

There is a species of egotism, already alluded to, which is consistent with the humblest estimate of self, and which often lurks in the most pious minds. Practical Christianity aims mainly at the affections; not because its effect was designed to terminate with them, but because they constitute the motives of conduct. By preserving them in rectitude, therefore, the uprightness of the whole nature is established. The Christian is required to

watch over his heart with scrutinizing vigilance, as the primary indispensable condition to a pure and well-ordered life. It is his first business to detect every improper spiritual motion, and subdue every corrupt ebullition; rebuking the insidious propensities, and bringing the wild passions into their appointed sphere. To accomplish this important work, which necessarily leads to every trait of human nobleness, the means of grace are furnished to him, and every inducement set forth, which a revelation of eternal life could afford.

It would not be strange if this conscious importance of the sensibilities, and constant diligence in guarding and controlling them, should result in the mental habitude of viewing objects of religious interest too exclusively as they relate to personal feeling, especially if the mind be not properly trained and informed. This is often the case, though the narrowness of the mind, which must, as a matter of course, ensue, may be prevented from seriously injuring the heart, by the strong counteracting influences of practical piety. But surely it is a deplorable thing that truths, which are great and awful in themselves, and which would continue to be as great and awful, if any individual soul were blotted from existence, should be habitually regarded by that soul only in their relation to itself. It is to be lamented, that in the view of intelligent beings, the mighty objects of life and thought, that exist throughout the bound-

less universe, should either be disregarded, or narrowed from their wide sublimity and majestic significance, to become mere ministers to the passing feelings of mortal men. And yet this is the inevitable consequence of a habit of mental egotism. Narrowness and superficiality of thought hold with it the relation of cause and effect, and must necessarily follow it. How often does God exist in the conception of the Christian, not as the Infinite Spirit, who controls the vast orbs of creation, dispensing light, and life, and happiness, in wide beneficence to their myriad habitants; but only as the Being, whose care it is to superintend his internal experiences, as if it were His sole business. The Atonement of Christ comes to be viewed, only as the little creature, called self, shares personally in its remedial effects; not as the Central Truth and Chief Glory in all God's dispensations to mankind, involving the eternal destiny of the entire world. The gracious dealings of God with the soul, by the Holy Spirit, assimilating it to His glorious image, and preparing it with benevolent skill, for its sublime heritage beyond the grave, lose their grandeur of purpose, in what might almost be termed a sort of sensual anxiety for present frames and feelings. The debasing influence extends to all the great and thrilling truths which pertain to the soul. The effect of their speculative grandeur, to expand and ennoble the mind, is lost. They, virtually, become the contracted things,

which they would be, if they possessed no other relation than the one in which they are exclusively regarded.

These observations show how strong and constant is the tendency to exercise egotism; how often that tendency becomes effect; how inevitably it produces narrowness, obliquity, superficiality, and weakness of mind; and how naturally, if not powerfully counteracted, it generates prejudice, uncharitableness, and every form of intolerance.

Self is the great antagonist to all spiritual freedom and elevation; not when it is kept within its lawful and humble bounds, but when it grows into a pervading mental egotism, and becomes the point to which every thing is made to tend, and have reference; like the false astronomy which made earth the centre of the solar and stellar systems. The true Copernican philosophy, representing it as but a subordinate unit in the mighty host of heaven, changing it from a vital centre to a mere satellite and recipient of the sun, while reducing it to its proper station in the material scale, does not rob it of its real dignity and just importance. In like manner self suffers no degradation when it is removed from a false to a true position, in the wide universe of being. Its place is determined in the fixed and eternal order of things, and there it must dwell and act, or the immutable law of Harmony is broken, and confusion,

and error, and darkness must follow. The injuries which are thus done, in distorting and enfeebling the spiritual structure, are well known to all earnest and far-seeing self-searchers. David prays for nothing, with greater urgency, than deliverance from "presumptuous sins." Goethe says, through the mouth of "the Collector:" "For the present, and for ever, I have done with myself." Earnestness and deep sincere truthfulness of character, cannot be expected from the confirmed egotist. His mind revolves within the little world of his excellencies and performances, which possesses, in proportion to its narrowness, a concentrated intensity of vitality. Public opinion is the shrine, before which he reverently and humbly kneels. Rumour engages an anxious solicitude of attention; the eye and ear are keen to catch its faintest shades and whispers, and the mind conforms to them with supple readiness. Conventionality comes to be the mould in which opinion is cast. The first inquiry is, not what is truth, but what is acknowledged to be truth. Things are believed, because others believe them, and, what is decisive, because others expect them to be believed. There is always a part to play, a certain character to support, in the eyes of others. This gives birth to affectation, which imparts a shallow falseness to word and manner. The man becomes a weak slave to shows and appearances;

he is no longer himself, but what others expect him to be.

The affectation produced by egotism, may have another very different form of development. It often shows itself in an assumed disregard of received opinions, amounting to contemptuous recklessness. As in the former case, the question still is, not what is truth, but what is acknowledged to be truth ; with the aim, not at conformity, but opposition. This is exhibited with an ostentation that seeks to be seen and heard, and which is much disappointed if it escapes remark. It studies at a noticeable bluntness and fearlessness ; and, as the best way to make it appear, opposes received notions and established customs, because they are so. It must, at all events, be known to be independent, not that it cares a jot to be so in reality, but because it fancies a certain admiration and deference will be accorded to a free, reckless opposition.

In this case, as in the former, the mind is equally in search for the incense of applause : it is acting an artificial part, made up of falsities and distortions. Both forms of character are equally false, and equally opposed to that earnest and god-like freedom which ardently seeks for truth in her virgin sacredness ; and abides with her, wherever she be found, whether in the lonely wilderness, or in the shrine of men's hearts, or sur-

rounded by foes, who would put her to a death of shame.

This is the true spiritual nobleness, which is humble without servility, fearless without ostentation, and firm without brute stubbornness; whose words and actions spring forth freely from honest earnestness of soul, without the studied falseness of affectation; which is released from conventional servitude, because wholly captivated by the grace, and awed by the majesty of Truth. It is born of Humility, taking the mind out of itself, and moulding it to the free loveliness and grandeur of God's creation.

Christianity combines every counteracting influence to egotism, and its concomitants. Its speculative influence, as well as practical effects, are in direct hostility to all self-importance, narrowness, and uncharitableness. The practical bearing of Christianity is so immediately pointed against uncharitableness, and its precepts respecting it are so obvious, that the Christian cannot for an instant doubt, that it is impossible for both to exist habitually together. The words and whole spirit of the Bible have set that point for ever at rest. The sincere Christian, therefore, cannot entertain uncharitableness as a welcome and abiding guest. Hence, it is possible for egotism to exist in the mind, while its natural effect, which otherwise would be certain, to produce uncharitableness in the heart, may be, so far, neutralized, by

practical piety, which, if it have any effect, must widen and ennoble the affections. A man, therefore, may be a Christian, a very imperfect, yet sincere Christian, who, with Christ-like feelings to his fellow-men, and an humble estimate of his own value, may get into the mental habitude of viewing great truths too exclusively in the, perhaps, smallest and lowest of all their relations, the relation to himself. This is certainly not a result of Christianity; for, as far as it has been brought to bear upon him, it has elevated and expanded his nature; and if the mind were but cultivated with attentive care, so as to receive the influence of its intellectual beauty and grandeur, its whole effect would then be felt, both practical and speculative, and mental narrowness and distortion would vanish.

The great truths of Christianity, considered apart from its practical lessons, are opposed to the effects of egotism, in the same manner that all wide and general truth tends to give breadth and fidelity to the views of the mind. The earnest pursuit of knowledge, and the deep contemplation of nature, in all her forms, are evidently disinterested, and must naturally exercise and strengthen the capacity of perceiving objects in their full relations, and upon every side. The astronomer, who reads with searching eye the letters of light which the finger of God has written on the broad page of the heavens, is absorbed in his elevating

task. The vast and noble thoughts which fill and delight his mind, effectually abstract the attention from the little sphere in which he lives and acts. The petty narrow things around and within him, sleep in unconscious nothingness, while the glowing intellect ponders and evolves the deep calculations which form its pathway through the abyss of time and space. In those awful depths he steers his assured course among the mighty laws and worlds of the universe, discovering new objects of creative power, and perceiving the far-off wanderers of infinity, as they approach from a distance, which it will take an age of their swift course to accomplish. If it were possible, in the midst of these traces of the invisible Spirit, to turn his thoughts upon his own relative importance, it would be to exclaim,—“What is man that Thou art mindful of him!”

So with the chemist, pursuing the earnest study of nature in her minute forms, and recondite retreats. So with the metaphysician, threading that greatest labyrinth, the human mind; searching, with an eye of deep inquiry, the laws which control its complicated and wonderful structure. So, in short, with every investigator of general and absolute truth: the mind, in every such exercise, is carried out of itself, and loses, perforce, its paltry egotism, amidst great and immutable facts. It is brought into the habitude of viewing objects as they really are, in all their relations, and the im-

partial fidelity of vision, which is thus produced, enables it to see and estimate self, according to its true value. Hence, the proverbial strong tendency of extensive knowledge to produce humility, which is only a name for that just valuation of self, which belongs to the condition of mankind. The often repeated observation of Sir Isaac Newton, that he had been but as a child playing upon the beach, while the unexplored ocean of truth stretched boundlessly before him, is deeply illustrative of this important law of the mind.

The peculiarly powerful counteraction, afforded by speculative Christianity, to the class of evils under consideration, arises from its unfolding to the view great beings, as well as great things, and greater beings and things than are offered to the mind in any other department of truth. If the objects which meet the senses in this world, are capable, by the systematic study of their laws and properties, to invigorate and enlarge the capacity, how much more effectual must be the same influence imparted by the things which pertain to eternity.

Thought is carried beyond the bounds of time and matter, beyond all that ends, and all that perishes, to a state of exalted and immutable grandeur. A wide country stretches before it, glorious in uncreated light, majestic in its mighty repose, peopled with forms of unimaginable beauty, and glowing with high and noble intelligences. Life, and

peace, and joy reign throughout that broad realm, and fill it with all pure and lofty enthusiasms. The beauty which is of holiness, and the sublimity of mighty things, come over the spirit like a trance of solemn delight, enchaining it breathlessly, and thrilling it with deep, rapt joy. Eternity sleeps in the silence and awe of its vastness, pregnant with the voiceless secrets of an immemorial history, and darkened by the terrible shadow of a waiting retribution.

Beyond these overwhelming scenes, thought rises still higher to the contemplation of the mighty and infinite Being, "whose way is in the sea, and whose path is in the great waters, and whose footsteps are not known." In that inaccessible glory and majesty, in that wide beauty and grandeur, in that depth of holiness, and wisdom, and power, and love, the energies of thought may find their fullest and highest employment for ever.

It is impossible that the mind should rest habitually in the contemplation of the greatest scenes, and truths, and beings of the universe, without receiving deep and salutary impressions of the sublimity of the creation. The real position of self, with its little circle of anxieties and interests, in the great scale, will be perceived, and comprehensive views, and enlarged thoughts will take the place of the one-sidedness and narrowness of egotism. When the intellectual effects of the speculative truths of Christianity be joined with its prac-

tical requirements and lessons, and the whole viewed together, there can remain no doubt, that its influence tends to remove narrowness and superficiality of mind. This influence is applied only in more or less imperfect degrees in this life; but it is plain, from these partial effects, as well as from the nature of the thing, that it tends to produce a "spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

CHAPTER VII.

Poetry.

POETRY is an affection of the mind, arising upon the perception of the modes of spirit in objects of sense or thought ; and this poetic quality of objects consists in, and is measured by, the related and concurrent harmony of parts to end in a final result of expression and effect.

The difficulty of defining poetry seems to arise from attempting too much. There are certain boundary lines in the domain of truth, beyond which the mind cannot pass with clearness and profit. The justness of definition, particularly, depends upon keeping patiently and faithfully within the limits of the shining light ; for then, though it may not be perfectly complete, it will be just and satisfactory as far as it goes. The wild and fantastic work made by the ancients, with the attributes of matter and spirit, shows what folly, of error and perplexity, results from the mind attempting to deal with the essence of things. The fiat of nature is, that man shall not know all of anything ; and wisdom consists in finding this out, in respecting the limitation, and in heartily searching for what it is given to know.

It is very possible, that the above definition of

poetry will not be entirely satisfactory; but a short examination of it will, at least, serve to give it a development.

That poetry includes a certain, specific affection of the mind, of course cannot be doubted. It may be urged, however, as it often has been, that it includes this, and something still beyond it. According to the present definition, poetry is, in all that strictly belongs to it, *only* an affection of the mind.

So much perplexity and confusion have appeared in the reasonings on the present subject, that perhaps the clearest method of treatment will be, to consider it in connection with some one of the mental conditions, which is circumstantially analogous, and clearly understood. Take, for instance, that expressed in Belief. Belief may be defined to be a state of the mind, produced by the perception of satisfactory evidence for the existence of facts, or supposed facts. It may exist with, or without, an act of outward expression. Suppose that it tends outwardly: that is, to communicate itself to other minds. The appropriate evidence is brought forward, and connected with its conclusions by a chain of reasoning. This reasoning may be conducted, according to the most accurate principles of art, rising progressively, by steps of obvious connection, to the point to be proved, or it may proceed without adherence to rule. Yet, it will be readily admitted, that belief is more efficiently expressed by the clear and pure reasoning which is

founded on principles of just logic, than that which is clogged by foreign matter, and without obvious connection.

Belief, then, like poetry, is produced by something external to itself, i. e., evidence, and is most expressively and appropriately embodied, according to certain rules of reasoning, as poetry is in versification.

Now, when belief is to be defined, no peculiar difficulty is encountered, because it is not imagined to consist in the things which produce it, nor in that outward form, which is its most appropriate embodiment. It is separated from these, and defined to be, as it is, only a state of the mind. No question is made that it involves evidence in its production, and reasoning in its efficient expression; but these receive their suitable, distinctive names, and become, as they ought, subjects of separate consideration.

No objection is made to the commonly received definition of belief, because it is never expected to be blended, essentially, either with its causes or effects; in the same manner, that a house cannot be said to consist in the architect, or the persons it shelters, or an engine, in the manufacturer, or the things it transports. As a state of the mind, it cannot be further explained. Inquiry has reached its limit in that direction; if it attempts to go beyond, and pierce the essence of mind and its attributes, it must be lost in a maze of perplexed absurdities.

It remains only to be told under what conditions it arises, and, then, each man's consciousness reveals it to himself.

Poetry is circumstantially analogous to belief throughout. It is produced by something specific, and external to itself, and it may remain with, or without, expression; but, when outwardly embodied, it is most appropriately and efficiently expressed, in a certain form, and by certain rules of art. Why then should it not be subjected to a like severity of abstraction, and strictness of analysis?

Inasmuch as things do not consist either in their causes or effects, poetry does not consist either in the spirit-like attributes of matter, or in the harmonies of verse. It is only a state of the mind; and the conditions under which it arises, like the evidence which results in belief, become a subject of separate consideration.

Secondly: it is vain to select any definite objects, or classes of objects, as those which exclusively produce the poetic feeling. The poet lives in what is called the "hackneyed world," and, yet, such is the fine delicacy of his mind, that it deeply responds to the charm of poetry which invests all things. A gladness of beauty seems ever to rest upon nature, and breathe with a fresh buoyancy and grace to the heart. The moving trees, the towering mountains, the green grass, the grey rocks, the flowing water, the soaring eagle, the woodland songsters, all forms, and colours, and

sounds that meet his "open sense," seem linked in an all-pervading harmony. Among the clouds, his eye traces wide fields, where fleecy flocks are at quiet pasture, and strange shapes, and stately cities, with spires, and palaces, and walls, and all architectural wonders. Above all, there is an inner sense, which sees when the eye is shut, which hears when the ear is deaf, which, in the trance of dumb silence, communes with the spiritualities of the universe, in a language which has no words, and no audible speech.

The eye of the poet is not confined to any specific class of objects, but embraces all the forms of nature. Whatever comes before him seems to possess a sort of magnetic attraction. He often discourses of the commonest and smallest things, in such a sweet and striking manner, as to show that even they are clothed with the witchery of poetry: this he conveys to his verse with a skill and felicity that produces a correspondent sentiment in all accordant minds. Thenceforth, these objects are redeemed from their insignificance, and invested with a tender and noble charm. Read a fine poem: the poet does not limit himself to any particular ideas, but discourses, at liberty, of every thing connected with his subject, wandering with free carelessness through the fields of nature and thought towards his destination. Yet there is poetry in all the objects he sees, and in his descriptive painting of them. Hence, one often hears of prose-poetry,

of a man's talking poetry, and, sometimes, of even living a life of poetry, as has been said of Shelley. This can only arise from the all-pervading diffusion throughout nature, of the influences which produce the poetic affection. And these are endless. The sublime, the beautiful, the graceful, the odd, the useful, the grotesque, the gigantically great, the perfectly-formed diminutive, the fit, the daring, the wild, with a thousand other spirit-like shades of expression, flit over, and animate the great, speaking face of nature. These are the delicate fingers, with which she is ever drawing music from the harp-strings of the poet's mind; and she assays the same with all human harps, but many of the finest strings are untuned, and either jingle harshly to her touch, or give forth no audible sound.

There are objects, however, which produce the poetic affection in a more eminent degree than others: such as the most striking forms of grandeur, beauty, and grace. The contemplation of these images is accompanied, in most minds, by a consciousness of poetry, more or less vivid. This proceeds from the fact, that all minds possess the same properties, only in different proportions of combination, and, therefore, while all men have a sufficient susceptibility to poetic influences to produce a consciousness of poetry under certain exigencies, the perfect poet may experience it in the most ordinary conjuncture of circumstances.

Hence, while a man is under the influence of

narcotics, his mind is lulled to a joyful serenity, and a paradise of beauty seems to open around him. Yet what is this paradise, but the common matter-of-fact world? The objects which meet the senses have undergone no change, but a most important and striking one has occurred to the mind: a change, which has made it susceptible to influences, perhaps unfelt previously, but, certainly, as much diffused over the scene then as now. These considerations are sufficient, without further extension, to show that the influences, productive of the poetic affection, are not confined to any definite objects either of the senses or thought.

Thirdly: the poetic sentiment is produced by viewing things in their final harmonious result. Not that this view of things is sufficient to give any man the consciousness of poetry, because a susceptibility to poetic influences may be lacking, in which case the effect fails from the peculiar constitution of the mind. But, whenever poetry is produced, it is by this particular view of things in their whole result. This is the same as to say, that those influences, whatever they be, which produce the poetic feeling, are exclusively the properties of combination, and the gift of the poet lies in that fine delicacy of mental constitution, which enables him to be affected by them.

Analysis is fatal to poetry. When the idea of a mountain is brought before the mind, and regarded in its entire aspect of towering height and

colossal body, invested with torrents, precipices, and trees, over all which soars the clear blue sky, a mental state ensues, which rises to the elevation of poetry. But when the mountain is mentally separated into its chemical constituents, when its rocks, and trees, and earth are dissolved to their final elements, the poetic sentiment vanishes, and gives place to a state of the mind of a totally different order. Again: when the mind is brought to regard a lovely specimen of the human form, viewed in the whole result, a vivid perception of beauty arises, but when the attention turns upon the constituent parts of bones, sinews, muscles, blood, viscera, and skin, and, still further, to their chemical constituents, the consciousness of poetic admiration meets an unfriendly influence, and disappears. The spectacle of an eagle soaring aloft may excite a rapturous enthusiasm, but if divested of life and torn asunder, its limbs and plumage scattered confusedly upon the ground, it is no longer able to delight the eye. A tree from the mountain, a beating heart exposed to view, a bright plume from the eagle, may produce a consciousness of the poetic feeling, but it would still arise from viewing each of them as a whole, from beholding the harmony of result: if they be dissolved to their elementary principles, the effect upon the mind again changes to a different order or affection.

Things, viewed chemically, possess properties

which none of their constituent elements, in a separate state, exhibit; these properties, therefore, belong exclusively to the whole result, and are wholly the effect of the combination: as when the union of elements, devoid of nutrition in themselves, will, when combined, form a wholesome and nourishing substance, but taken in a separate state, will even produce death. In fact, chemistry teaches that all material forms exhibit but few strictly elementary principles, yet how diverse are substances of matter in shape and quality. So also, the union of soul and body gives rise to powers and susceptibilities which neither possesses separately: as, for instance, the command of the will over the muscles, and the action of the mind through the senses.

There are then properties which belong exclusively to combinations; dissolve them, and these properties vanish, re-combine, and they re-appear. In things connected with the poetic affection, this property of result consists in a spirit-like expression, which, as the effect of combination, is not confined to any particular part or trait, but pervades the whole, as with a delicate and ethereal air. This spirit-like expression is characterized by the specific type of the combination, whether it be one of beauty, grandeur, grace, or whatever it may be, and this forms the object and subject of Poetry.

The influences which give rise to the poetic

affection, have been often said to consist, in the mind's investing material forms with the attributes and modes of spirit. With this notion, the present definition of poetry has no immediate concern: since it does not purport to state the origin of poetic influences, but simply that, whether they be strictly properties of matter, or invested in matter by an action of the mind, they are felt only when things, whatever they be, which possess them, are viewed in their final harmonious result. But there seems to be no more reason for supposing that the mind invests matter with the qualities of spirit, than that it invests it with its admitted properties. It surely cannot justly be concluded that poetic influences are not strictly properties of matter, on the ground of their being of an intangible nature. It is impossible to conceive of any property whatever of matter, excepting as an abstract and invisible quality. Nothing is visible or tangible, with respect to material forms, but their substratum. The properties which are ascribed to physical substances, are supposed to inhere in this substratum, but they are hid from the senses, and can only be conceived of as abstract qualities. That the poetic influences of physical forms are intangible, does not, therefore, conclude against their being strictly properties of matter; and one additional view will show that the theory under consideration, in reality, presupposes that they are.

Why should the mind, upon this hypothesis, dis-

criminate, in investing particular material forms, with particular attributes or modes of spirit, and observe the specific attributed type in all cases universally? For instance: why should terror be invariably invested in the earthquake or the tempest, and graceful beauty in flowers and the female form? In other words, what forms the ground of discrimination? It may be answered, that this ground is furnished by a certain perceived adaptation between the special type of the physical body, and the particular attributed quality of spirit; less than this, at the least, cannot be said. Now what constitutes this adaptation, if it be not a peculiar arrangement and certain specific harmony of parts to produce a definite result, which, in different material combinations, does not exist? And how can that result be said to be adapted to a quality of spirit, unless by being perceived, in some manner, to resemble it? It is, therefore, granted, that the material objects of poetry bear an actual resemblance to the attributed qualities of spirit, and that this resemblance is the result of a definite arrangement of physical parts. Now the only manner in which any thing can be said, with meaning, to be a property of matter, is that it belongs to, and inheres in, it. It therefore follows, that the adaptation, or resemblance, it is immaterial which it be called, which exists between material forms and spiritual attributes, is, in point of fact, a property of matter. This admits all that

is requisite : for nothing could be further contended of poetic influences, as strictly properties of matter, than an adaptation or resemblance to the modes of spirit, and this must necessarily be granted, in order to account for the fact, that the mind discriminates in investing particular forms with particular spiritual attributes. It is not only as difficult to conceive how any definite arrangement of physical parts can produce an adaptation to spiritual qualities, as that poetic influences are strictly properties of matter ; but, in point of fact, the former includes and establishes the latter. This point, however, will be left here, as not being immediately involved in the present inquiry.

The amount of poetic influence, possessed by any material form, is in direct ratio with the degree of harmony of all its constituent parts to one final result. This may be clearly perceived by considering a fine statue in the different stages of artistic execution. First, it appears as a shapeless block of marble. It is then gradually wrought by the sculptor into a nearer and nearer resemblance to the human form. At length the outline is complete. Then comes the delicate touches of the chisel, moulding every muscle, and limb, and feature, and minute line, that they may all unite to express the specific type of the artist's ideal. Attitude, gesture, appendages, all are studied, because all have reference to each, and to the ultimate designed result. Finally, the marble starts

upon the sight in the almost breathing radiance of the Apollo ;

“ in his eye
And nostril beautiful disdain, and might
And majesty flash their full lightnings by,
Developing in that one glance the Deity.”

Why did the statue not speak to the sense with the same expression of god-like beauty and scorn at any distinct stage of incompleteness? Plainly, because of defective harmony of parts. As this was gradually supplied by the successive strokes of the chisel, the design became more and more apparent, and, with the finishing touch, became complete.

A lion sleeping lazily in his cage, may give rise to no further idea than that of strength in repose ; but if he be aroused and maddened, he fills the ideal conception of wild majesty and impetuous rage.

The two different types of the same form have variously affected the mind, because elements were added to the one, which the other lacked : such as, aggressive front, flashing eyes, swelling muscles. Those who consider the poetic influences as invested in matter by the mind, would account for this diversity of ideal expression, by saying, that in each case the number and arrangement of constituent elements produced an adaptation or resemblance to the attributed specific quali-

ty of spirit. Upon any theory, however, as to the origin of poetic influences, the present point is established, i. e. the dependence of poetic influences upon a definite arrangement and harmony of physical parts, and the direct ratio between the amount of the one, and that of the other.

This harmony of constituent parts will sometimes be so perfect, that the resulting physical body will seem the ideal of its kind, and rise to the mind, ever after, as a representative image of the abstract quality which it types. For instance: there are some human faces where every feature, and every minute line, and the entire configuration, are set, to contribute to, and result in, one final point of expression, whether of severity, mild firmness, gentleness, placidity, or whatever it be: and this nice harmony ends in such a perfect visible index of the quality expressed, that the face haunts the memory of the beholder, and rises before him like a representative ideal, whenever his thoughts happen to turn upon the corresponding abstract quality.

A hive of bees, or an ant's nest, will present to the mind the abstract quality of industry made visible: plainly because the condition, the habits, the intent activity of the little animals, and every thing connected with them, which meets the eye, fit in, and tend, with a perfection of unity, to express a final, embodied result of industry. An elegant female form, moving, with flexile ease, through the

buoyant measures of the dance, may so perfectly embody grace of motion, as to become the ideal of it in the thoughts of the spectator for ever after.

A wild beast, at bay, will fill the idea of awful, determined, impetuous hostility: if raging over a prostrate, struggling man, and fiercely rending him with reeking fangs, the spectacle embodies all that is wild and piercing in tragedy: the ape forms the very ideal of oddity: the flower, of delicacy, and graceful beauty; and even the worthless animal, known as the sloth, possesses a strong, poetic interest, from the absolute perfectness with which every circumstance connected with it, harmonizes to express the abstract quality which has furnished its name: the imperceptible creep, clinging tenacity of hold, piteous, supplicating look, and faint-hearted cry of complaint, make up a faultless embodiment of sloth, in all its querulous and abject helplessness.

It would seem, that any object of the senses, or of thought, whatever may be its result of significance, is capable of producing a consciousness of the poetic affection, under a certain condition, namely, a pure and absolute coherence of harmony in all its constituent parts to end in the single, significant result. This appears in the perception which has been observed to arise in the mind from the precision and severe purity of mathematical demonstrations, and which has been called one of beauty, but without any good reason, and appa-

rently in no other sense than of poetry, which consciousness revealed it to be. A lengthened argument, where every constituent consideration is stated with just exactness, and the whole built up, with the massive coherence, and solid precision, of a work of masonry, will produce a consciousness of the poetic affection, when viewed in the full result, as a faultless work of art, though it may not possess a jot of the poetry of particular words or thoughts. Such, for instance, as Butler's Analogy, which is not only utterly devoid of the poetry of words, or ideas, but in which the author speaks with open contempt of the imaginative faculty; yet perhaps this argument has never been contemplated as a work of art, without giving rise to a perception of ideal strength, revealed in the majesty of commanding nakedness.

Even a well-adjusted system of truth, viewed as a harmonious whole, may produce the poetic feeling. When a general view is taken of science, or of Christianity, and the mind is yielded to the contemplation of one all-comprehending idea of either of them, there is a poetic perception of the perfect harmony of parts to produce a single result of grand significance. And the same may be observed of particular branches of science, or truths of Christianity, considered in their distinct, but full, individuality. Hence, poetry is both subjective and objective.

When the mind views a material form, or a sub-

ject of contemplation, in its entireness, it perceives something, which is not perceived, when such form, or subject, is regarded in its separate parts. This additional quality is, therefore, the combined result of the related tendencies of parts, as they are connected to each other, and to the whole ultimate type of the body. And it is the state of mind, which follows the perception of this quality of result, that constitutes poetry, according to the definition of it, with which this inquiry commenced. In the same manner, that belief is produced, not by considering circumstances in an isolated way, but in that relation to each other, and to a single, ultimate point, which gives rise to the conception of evidence. The poetic influence is, like evidence, exclusively a property of result. It follows from the above definition, if true, that there is no limitation to the significance of things which produce the poetic affection. Whether they express grandeur, grace, beauty, gaiety, mirth, utility, wildness, modesty, precision, strength, hatred, love, or whatever they do express, they are capable of producing the consciousness of poetry, under a single condition, namely, that their constituent parts harmoniously unite to form, and end in, the specific expression : to say, that this expression must typify a mode or attribute of spirit, is as unnecessary, as it would be to say, that the state in which an intelligent agent is placed, to think, and act, must be adapted to his nature.

Nature, then, abounds, and must always abound, with the qualities which produce the poetic affection. These are sometimes presented with such forceful pureness of result, arising from faultless harmony of parts as to be perceived and felt by any mind; as in the witchery of female beauty, or the blasting violence of the whirlwind; but always capable of impinging, with felt power, upon the delicate visual nerve of the poet.

Why is it, that the operation of the mind in the analysis of the grandest and loveliest forms, instantly divests them of the poetic quality? If the foregoing remarks be correct, the answer is obvious: because, by the separation of constituent parts, the property of result disappears with the combination. The manifest hostility of analysis to poetry cannot well be explained upon other grounds.

It is not at all meant to be implied here, that science and poetry cannot be equally cultivated and enjoyed by the same mind. On the contrary, works of genius, whether literary or of art, exhibit both a power of severe analysis, and of masterly combination, and both must, of necessity, exist in combined excellence, to constitute the highest order of mind. In fact, every mind is constantly shifting from one to the other of these processes, with equal frequency. The being, who was only capable of combining, or analyzing, could not properly be called human.

The point of human perfection is the develop-

ment, in excellence, of every human endowment, and, therefore, all are capable of acting with harmony, and increased efficacy, when existing in the fullest and most perfect proportion. All that is meant to be held forth here is, that when the poetic affection is felt at all, it proceeds from a perception of the property of result, and that when the mind passes to the equally important operation of analysis, a different affection arises; so that it is possible for the same mind at one moment to thrill to the poetic power of an object, at the next, to be absorbed in the studious examination of its elementary constituents.

Apply the present hypothesis of poetic influences as a general law to particular facts, and it will be seen to explain them all satisfactorily. It explains the known fact, that analysis destroys the perception of poetry: for if poetic qualities were not peculiar to combinations, then it could not be explained why they should disappear upon the separation of constituent parts. It also explains the ideal impersonation of abstract qualities, and diffused influences, in the embodied representative gods and goddesses of antiquity. Also, the peculiar susceptibility of the mind in childhood and early youth, to the poetic affection, as being a period when it is most open to the influences of objects, in their state of uninvestigated combination. And, finally, which is a fact of similar nature to the one last mentioned, the lavish poetry of early times, ere science had

diminished the universal perception of that deep spirit-like expression, which seemed to breathe, like the witchery of an animated soul, from every object of the material world.

What is it that rendered the youth of the world a time of wonder and poetry? Plainly, the ignorance of the laws and facts of physical organization. When Eclipse cast its portentous, noon-day shadow, it was the strife of mighty spirits on the wide battle-fields above. The Sun was a bright god, who traversed the heavens to dispense light and heat; when he disappeared at the quiet eventide, he had gone to his drowsy couch in the occident; when he appeared in the dewy morn, he shone and sparkled with unwonted lustre, because refreshed by rest. The Moon was a chaste and placid goddess; the forked lightning was the dreadful thunderbolt hurled from the mighty hand of Jove, and the lowering cloud was his awful brow bent in wrath; the woods and the streams, the mountains and the ocean, were peopled with spiritual intelligences, conforming to the ideal type of their habitations and realms. This constitutes the very essence of poetry, and was the necessary effect of a universal perception of the spirit-like expressions of combinations, to which the mind was forced, by the mystery which surrounded every form of nature.

The Bible exerts a strong, poetic influence upon the mind, by causing it to view its grand truths, principally in their whole harmonious result.

Although the mighty facts and beings unfolded to man in Revelation, are capable of being greatly understood, as they relate to him in his condition and conduct, yet their nature and other vast relations are unknown. The ideas of eternity, and of the Infinite Spirit, are brought by Christianity to occupy the loftiest and widest place in the mind, and shown to relate vitally to all other ideas, as the Sun does to the terrestrial objects beneath. All things, whether of matter or spirit, and the world of revealed truth, are seen to be linked by an awful connection with the mighty eternity, and to tend to it. These relations, therefore, are felt to exist, but are unknown : and this mysterious aspect which looks upward from man to the high heaven, and which, therefore, cannot be read by his inquiring eye, invests the whole with an impressive grandeur. Take the great truth of atonement as an instance. As a benevolent plan for saving the lost, begun and carried on in the mercy of God, it stands forth clearly to the view. Its efficacy, and mode of appropriating application is, or may be, fully understood by an attentive examination of the Bible. As it relates to man and acts upon him, it may be analyzed, investigated, and fully known. But when the mind turns to its connections with the vast eternity, its birth in the far depths of the voiceless past, the construction of its great scheme by infinite wisdom, the purposes, the instruments, the wide and perfect adjustments, which belong to

the whole idea of it, and the momentous change which it will accomplish upon the destinies of the human race in the pregnant future, a vast mystery surrounds it as it bursts upon the view of the mind, in the sublimity of its one mighty idea. A like influence pervades every other truth of Revelation, and causes them to produce the same result. That mystery is favourable to the poetic affection, the early history of mankind establishes beyond a doubt. The Bible is, in the present era, as the material world was to the ancients, much of it understood, and much wrapt in grand and solemn mystery. If this mystery is the plain foundation of universally prevalent poetry in the one case, the conclusion is inevitable, that it must have a similar effect in the other, in kind, though powerful balancing forces may prevent it from reaching the same degree.

This tendency of the Bible to favour the poetic affection appears, farther, in the fact, that strong personal interest in an object opens the mind to the full influence, which it exerts as a complete whole. A thunder-cloud hanging over a defenceless man, stunning his ear with deafening explosions, and hurling its rapid bolts of flame on every side, compels him to regard it in its whole awful aspect. When a ship sinks in a tempestuous sea, while the raging billows answer to the angry howl of the storm, and the lowering heavens frown darkly over the hopeless scene, the desolating view breaks in one

overwhelming effect upon the crew. When a splendid landscape bursts unexpectedly upon the sight, a keen joy seizes the heart, and the mind is surrendered to the spirit of all-pervading beauty. A mother, hanging over her smiling babe, drinks a rapture from its infantile grace and loveliness, which gushes irrepressibly out, from an almost delirious tenderness: the consideration of its constituent elements does not cross her thoughts, it is the expressive air breathing out from the whole image, that constitutes the charm so potent to stir and thrill.

When personal interest is withdrawn, or diminished to a certain pitch, one may sit down in reflective composure, and coolly analyze these very combinations, which once moved him with feelings, that in their urgent engrossment swallowed up consciousness itself. Step by step, he dissolves the images into their separate parts; grandeur, beauty, grace disappear; the expressive spirit which animated these things, with an influence like vitality, vanishes; yet place him again under their full, individual power, and he is awed, struck or moved as formerly.

This influence of strong, personal interest, to enforce objects to be viewed in their final, entire result, is strikingly true of Christianity, and more especially, as its truths possess practical efficacy, only when considered in their character of perfect individuality.

The foregoing views illustrate the tendency of the Bible to cause itself to be regarded in a light most favourable to the poetic affection. A further consideration of the poetical effects of Christianity upon the general frame and tone of the mind, will show that it is highly friendly to the perception of poetic influences universally. The delicate perceptions of the poet result from the exquisite refinement of his mental organization, which enables him to feel more and see more than coarser natures. He, therefore, stands in a closer and fuller harmony with nature, in her perfect, symmetrical entireness, made up both of the tangible and intangible. He possesses the susceptibility of perceiving the most spirit-like attributes of objects, and gives "a local habitation and a name" to things which do not exist to others, in the same manner that light does not exist to the blind, nor music to the deaf. The characteristic peculiarity of the poet consists, therefore, in the fineness of his sensibility, to which Christianity evidently tends in its practical effects. It unavoidably produces a softness and tenderness of feeling. It breaks the flinty heart, and dissolves it in repentance; it thrills it through with the gracious blessedness of mercy and love; it fills it with a warm and gushing charity, which pauses not to calculate, but flows forth with free exuberance to all beings. It is inconceivable, that a man should be a Christian, without being susceptible to influences of the most

refined and delicate nature. The tear of suffering and sob of the wounded heart, which may once have been passed unheeded, acquire a strange power to subdue and move. Domestic life becomes a holy thing, and calls out sensibilities of the sweetest and tenderest kind. The noblest sentiments of disinterested benevolence are exercised by the duties, which are due to society at large. The little circumstances of life rise into importance, as things which affect the immortal soul, for good or evil; and the constant observation of the heart, as the seat and fountain of the "issues of life," directs the attention to its minutest and most evanescent feelings. Christianity had its birth in sympathy for the suffering, and necessarily produces a sensitive regard for the condition of every being capable of joy or sorrow. This involves a refined delicacy of sensibility in the general frame and tone of the mind, which is coincident with the first and main condition of a susceptibility to the poetic affection. And this coincidence is carried out, almost to perfection, by the resemblance, in nature, of the influences which give birth to poetry and to vital religion.

The great aim and scope of Christianity consists in the assimilation of man to God, who is a spirit: and this is accomplished by the progressive spiritualization of human nature. The brutalizing effect of worldliness and sensuality is hostile, not only to the supreme love for God, but even to the

perception and knowledge of His nature. The whole influence of the efficient agencies, employed in the birth and growth of heart-religion, is directed primarily to open the "inner sense" to the perception of spiritualities, and to give them a controlling and habitual authority over the visible and tangible. The very life of piety is drawn, therefore, from the perception of spiritual objects, and its degree is measured by that of the clearness, with which they stand before the habitual view of the mind. Hence every act of devotion, every exercise of pure religion, every acknowledgment of the Great Spirit, who invisibly pervades and sustains all material forms, tends to advance the soul in its spiritual growth, and better prepare it for the joyful moment when it shall entirely cast off its burden of clay, and burst forth, in a higher state of being, a radiant spirit. The work of spiritualization is not only a refining, but also, a deepening process; and the one is, in a great measure, the natural result of the other: for, in purging the soul from the dross of sensualism, and the distorting medium of worldliness; the obstructions to the mental eye are removed, and the scope of its view enlarged.

Perhaps in no respect is Christianity more friendly to poetry, than in delivering the mind from the prevalent influence of the passions and vanities of life. These are as much at war with poetry as with religion. To the sensualist in his

filth, the worldling in his frivolity, or hard selfish narrowness, and the misanthrope in his spiritual putridity, nature, with her myriad voices, is dumb, with her storied pages, is a sealed book. It is in the stillness and pure freedom of the soul, that it thrills most deeply to the spirit-like influences which produce the high conceptions and rich enjoyments of poetry. When the maxims of the world are forgotten; when its frivolities hush their importunity; when the gross scales of sensualism fall from the spiritual eyes, and passion sleeps in oblivion, the mind opens to a widely-diffused beauty and significance, and melts with the tenderness of poetic rapture.

The Christian, like the poet, is under the dominion of the invisible, and, hence, it is often said of both, that they belong to another sphere. The characteristic distinction of the one, as of the other, consists in living under the habitual and controlling influence of spiritualities, and the measure of poetry, as of piety, is determined by the degree of clearness and power, with which they are perceived and felt. Whatever, therefore, nourishes one, must be friendly to the other, for the same susceptibility forms the foundation and explanation of both.

The conditions of poetry, with respect to the frame and state of the mind, are seen to be included in the practical effects of Christianity. A further examination of the poetic affection, in its moral as-

pect, will show its resemblance to the religious sentiment, in a light still more striking.

Religion and poetry are nearly akin. Veneration and love, ending in adoration, form the moral atmosphere, from which both draw the breath of life. The one is the worship of God immediately; the other is the worship of the attributes of God, as they are displayed and represented in His works. The man, who stands upon the sea-shore, amidst the thunder of the rolling surf, and looks out upon the majesty of the mighty waste, experiences a sentiment like his who abases himself lowly before the mercy-seat, and fills his mind with the image of the Infinite God. And, hence, when the poet stands alone in the craggy wilderness, and gazes around upon the dumb earth, and up to the solemn depths of the soaring sky, a feeling of vastness, and of silent, awful power, hushes the vanities of the heart, and bows it mightily down. He sees no living form, and yet he feels as if the spirits of a sleeping eternity were gathering around him, with earnest eyes, and pallid lips, to tell of the mighty Being, who broods over the scene, and upholds it, with an energy of such silent but impressive awe. There is a necessity laid upon the poet to adore the deep, grand influences of nature. They fill him with a wild inspiration of delight, which draws him irresistibly to bring himself under their enchainng and thrilling power. He loves to stand among alpine summits, that look like the dumb

hands of Time, grown pale with the hoar of ages, and pointing with solemn and awful significance to the high eternity. He loves to see the red lightnings flash upon their rugged sides and misty peaks, and hear their mighty tongues "calling and answering each other in thunder." He loves to see the torrents foam and leap through resounding gorges, and hear the heavy crash of the cataract, and the wild scream of the eagle among ancient rocks. He revels among ice-bound mountains, and huge glaciers, and the gloomy fastnesses, where tempests are born, and the thunder pealing from scowling heavens.

The potent charm of such objects consists in the grand and awful power which they embody, and which they are formed to convey, with such an impressive harmony of effect to the mind. The sentiment of veneration which they produce, constitutes the profoundest and most important emotion of the poet. In its deep engrossment, the heart is liberated from the fetters of every thing mean and trifling: it is brought in direct communion with the attributes of Deity, and is melted and subdued in a wild, awe-struck rapture of adoration.

So also, the poet yields, with a deep thrill of devotion, to that lovelier attribute of the Divinity, which peoples the earth with all beautiful forms and dyes, and softens and flushes her fair face with a mantle of witchery. The voice of "joy and gladness," trembling from every tongue of nature,

is music to his ear. He haunts the woodland banks of lakes, and gazes rapturously on the cool, tranquil waters, and on the moving boughs, and, with subdued but keen delight, he breathes the odour, and hears the melodies of the wood. He loves to go forth in the rich light of the young, rosy morn, and inhale the fresh breath of fields, and visit the fragrant groves, and blend the incense of his heart with the jocund sounds of refreshed and exuberant nature.

It is often his wont to wander to the sea-shore, when the young moon hangs his "slender sickle" in the west. And while the air fills with the dewy tenderness of eve, and the solemn hush of twilight steals gently over the softened scene, he gazes upon the blue, tranquil waters, until filled with unutterable thoughts of a far-off quietude and repose. A mighty love stirs in his yearning heart, and, again, he adores the spirit which was breathed upon earthly forms by the "Beauty of the Lord."

Adoration is the sentiment in which poetry and religion alike end: the one expressed towards the attributes of spirit, which are embodied and pictured to the view, in subordinate forms; the other uttered in immediate aspirations to the great, moulding spirit, the sum and fount of all ideal perfection.

Christianity furnishes every condition necessary to the formation and development of the poet, excepting the important one, which arises from the

original calibre and power of the intellectual principle, and which is most concerned in the free and happy expression of poetry. This, of course, depends upon causes which it cannot reach; but, as far as its influence extends, as one, which gives shape and colour to thought and feeling, it is manifestly friendly to the poetic affection, and leads naturally to a high cultivation and estimation of it.

CHAPTER VIII.

Philosophy.

PHILOSOPHY, in its perfect and most extended sense, is the knowledge which the mind has, or may have, of truth, in the full account of its reasons, and connections, in distinction from a cognizance of the mere historical existence of facts and relations.

It may be considered under two divisions, practical and speculative. Practical Philosophy is that portion of universal truth, discovered, or discoverable, in its reasons and connections, which is applicable to the moral or physical use of man. Speculative Philosophy includes all that is similarly known, or knowable, of all other truth. The present inquiry relates to the first of these divisions, as it respects conduct, and, mainly, to the system of practical truth, which was taught by the most distinguished among the ancient heathen sages; but also presents views, which are based upon the distinctive meaning of Philosophy, in its full and proper sense.

The ancient philosophy expresses the wise adaptation of the mind to a state of imperfection; enduring the ills of life, contentedly, in view of their being unavoidable, and enjoying its pleasures with

calm satisfaction and moderation, since a good must not be rashly discarded on account of incompleteness, and because excess is hurtful. It deals with the reason, rather than the show, of things. It distrusts first impressions as unreliable, and discards passion, because it destroys the temperance and truthfulness of thought. It preserves under all circumstances, whether painful or agreeable, a wise composure, since it is most accordant with the condition of man, who has no share in framing the vicissitudes of life.

The ideal of the ancient philosophy is a noble and lovely outbirth of deep wisdom. It was laboriously evolved by a far-seeing and comprehensive sagacity, toiling in the vast, dim domain of thought, for the general and immutable truths, which suit the condition of man. But it is like a cloud, of many dyes, floating with soft majesty in the blue depths of heaven. We gaze with rapture on its beautiful form, and would fain stand upon its alabaster top, as it sails in the wide, joyous freedom of the upper air. But it is inaccessibly distant, and even could one be transported thither, he would sink through yielding mist, and be precipitated to the petty level of the earth. Mere philosophy occupies the airy regions of the mind, but cannot act vitally upon the heart. It is invested with the attraction of intellectual grace and beauty, but it is essentially ideal and unattainable. It is after all but mist, beautiful mist, which we may gaze at and

admire, but which can support no weight; and the man, who puts his trust in it, will soon flounder amidst the corruptions, above which he hoped to soar. It would be of striking advantage to a race of purely intellectual beings, but it is impossible for it to exert a controlling efficacy of influence over the wild human heart.

If man were an intelligence, whose affections always moved in accordant harmony with the suggestions and dictates of judgment, then to inform the one would be to govern and order the other. But the passions are stubborn and rebellious, as well as blind, and deaf, and wilful things, habitually running counter to the plainest convictions of reason, and the most authoritative decisions of conscience. Though a sound and well-furnished understanding tends to give rectitude to the feelings, yet it is by no means sufficient, of itself, to keep the feet from wandering into forbidden paths. In the fierce excitement of awakened feeling, the whole nature is engrossed, and thought becomes powerless. The entire history of the world shows that the knowledge and virtue of mankind have always existed in wide disproportion. Even the sublime and impressive truths of revelation, combined, as they are, with the most awful sanctions, if only speculatively known, though they may tend to correct the motions of the heart, are wholly unable, of themselves, to do so in effect. It is only when they are united with positive commands, and the

whole applied by a higher agency, that they become sufficient to that end.

Philosophy is truth, pure, important, and indispensable truth, and therefore should be cherished and practised; but unfortunately it is truth which appeals only to the understanding, and utters itself with a voice of no peculiar authority. It is necessarily clothed with attractive beauty, and chains the admiration of the mind; but here its power ends, and hence it has never been of any important practical benefit, of itself, to mankind generally. Christianity embraces the entire of the ancient philosophy, but gives it a purer form, and places it on a high and practicable basis.

Temperance, in all things, constitutes the sum and essence of all that was true and worthy in the practical philosophy of the heathen sage. This was expressed in the self-control which it was taught should be exercised, in enduring existing ills with fortitude, and enjoying with placid moderation the lawful pleasures and reasonable pursuits of life. The motives which were offered to recommend it, arose from the ideal beauty of its simplicity and moral fitness, and its salutary effects in securing soundness of body, and a spiritual serenity and elevation of mind.

Christianity includes all this in the range of its universal applicability to the nature and condition of mankind, and, what is still more important, enforces it upon the heart, and engrafts it upon the

daily life with the most decisive and authoritative sanctions.

It would indeed be strange if a practical system of religion, framed by the all-wise creator of man, for the purpose of purifying the hidden sources of thought and action, and designed to give uprightness and moral beauty to the character, should fail to contain the important truths of the ancient philosophy. Accordingly, a wise and temperate moderation in all things must grow out of the letter and spirit of Christianity, and is included among the effects wrought upon the heart by the Holy Spirit. St. Paul says, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."

Here, then, it may be said in a general way, is philosophy, but it is purified, and enlarged, and made practicable. It is purified by a combination with the highest motives; enlarged by receiving a wider scope and more dignified purpose; and made practicable, because it is no longer left to the mere inefficient recommendation of theoretical beauty, and fitness, and expediency, but engrafted deeply and vitally upon the spiritual substance of the heart by the Holy Spirit.

There is a deep and restless craving in the human soul for inward peace. This was the strong motive which urged the powers of thought to expatiate in the wide world of truth, ere its shadowy vastness was illuminated by the light of Revelation.

There is something sublime in the toiling search of the mind amidst the depths of the unknown; searching with patient and unconquerable sagacity for that which will satisfy its spiritual hunger and thirst. The faculty of vision was great, but the light was feeble and partial, and the strongest eye cannot discern in the dark. The boundless domain of truth was then, as it is now, grand and immutable, but it lay partly wrapt in a dim obscurity, partly covered with pitchy blackness. In that pregnant gloom the ancient mind wrought mightily and loftily, and gave birth to great truths and great absurdities. The latter included almost the entire of the speculative philosophy of early times, the former all that was true and pure in the practical. But this system of truth had reference to man merely as a mortal, and no higher motive could be urged for it than that of expediency, no greater attraction could invest it than that of ideal beauty. Had man been but a creature of this life, and had it been possible to fix this system of truth, with controlling power, in his heart; that is, to make it practicable, as well as practical,—it would have been capable of giving inward peace. But both these qualifications were wanting. Philosophy required to be united with other truth, in order to complete a system which would be applicable to man in his full nature, as mortal and immortal, and with an influence which would fasten the combined whole with efficacy upon the heart.

These deficiencies are supplied by Christianity. Had the Bible merely revealed the immortality of the soul, and presented a complete system of practical truth, leaving it to recommend itself to man simply from the consideration of his present and eternal interests, it would, even with these important additions, have contained no motive beyond that of a high expediency, and it must have shared the inefficiency of philosophy. This is unanswerably proved by the fact, that it has no vital power over the unregenerate; and yet they feel the full influence arising from an awful expediency. They feel and acknowledge it; but something of a higher nature is still lacking to incorporate it, experimentally, in the inner and outward life. The condition of the enlightened unregenerate, with respect to religion, is a living and indisputable proof of the inefficacy of truth, merely upon grounds of expediency and moral fitness.

Christianity comes to the soul upon a totally different basis. Its primary lesson, the key and foundation of the whole system, is, that man is a fallen and depraved creature.

This is the only theory which can explain the wonderful fact, standing out prominently in all social and individual history, that the mere information of the understanding, and mere appeals to the affections, can never control the heart with vital and reliable power. This principle lies at the foundation of the inefficiency of every other sys-

tem ; and it is the declaration of it, and provision for it, which form the deep truthfulness, and operative power of Christianity. Man is a depraved being. It is, therefore, necessary, as the primary step, without which absolutely nothing can be done, to bring an influence to bear upon his heart, which shall establish its uprightness, restore a vital connection between the convictions and affections, and give to conscience its rightful authority, as the controller of the moral nature. When this is accomplished, the obstructions, which distorted and impeded the spiritual stream, are removed, the chafing restlessness, the crookedness, the foul stagnation disappear, and the clear waters sweep away in full deep majesty to the ocean of eternity. The agency of the Holy Spirit effectually performs this indispensable work. The soul is first aroused to an awful sense of the realities of its condition here, and its relations to the dread hereafter. The feeble lifeless ideas which speculative knowledge had produced upon these subjects, seem suddenly impregnated with an intense and startling vitality. The depravity of the heart is revealed with a clearness as indisputable as it is appalling. The wonderful patience and boundless power of God, together with the absolute rightfulness of his authority, arise vividly before the awakened conscience. The Divine vengeance seems to hang terrifically over the soul, ready to burst upon it with the consuming fury of a swift retribution.

Idle speculations, vain theories, refined reasonings, are swallowed up in the realized horrors of the "wrath to come." With an instinct, like the awakening of one who had unconsciously slept upon the brink of a precipice, the soul seeks only for a refuge from the overwhelming pressure of imminent peril. Heartfelt urgent prayer, born of agony and earnestness, bursts from the broken heart, and then there is an awful suspense of doubt, whether or not God has "forgotten to be gracious." Then, like the dawn of morning, comes the sweet fresh light of Atonement, warming, brightening, expanding, until it fills the soul with wide, deep, joyful peace. The spiritual nature is now purified and illuminated. The inner eye, which had been so long sealed in blindness, is now opened upon a new and boundless world. The relations of the soul to God are clearly disclosed. Expediency vanishes before the majesty of duty; the duty which is born of gratitude and love.

Such is regeneration, the first, the indispensable preparatory work in giving to truth a practical dominion over depraved beings. To accomplish this, the understanding and the affections were not only informed and appealed to, which might have been done, as it is, in innumerable instances, through life, without avail; but the mighty influences of the Holy Spirit descended and wrought in the whole man, and produced, with rapid all-pervading power, the changes and the glories of

the "new birth." Truth comes now upon the heart with exalted power, to fill, to guide, and to effectually control. Thus philosophy is made pure and practicable by connecting it with high motives, and by preparing the soul to receive it vitally.

If philosophy be defined to be a right institution of life, in its relations to this world, then practical Christianity may be said to be only an enlarged and complete philosophy: that is, a right institution of life, in all its relations.

The philosophical nature of Christianity is apparent in the fact that it is practical. This forms its essence and foundation. Without this, as its aim and basis, there would have been no Christianity; and, for this, it was purposed, framed, and put into the world. All the great speculative truths, and saving doctrines, and sublime appendages of means, and outward rites and institutions, which invest and accompany it, were linked with it, because they were necessary in order to complete a system which should be adapted to the whole condition of man, in all his relations, and, therefore, to make the body of practical truth practicable. Of the whole structure, however, it is the practical part which forms the vital core and substance, and which imparts meaning to the whole mass. The disclosure of man's fallen and depraved nature, the revelation of the Atonement, the applied agency of the Holy Spirit, the declaration of the

whole duty of the human race, were made, in order to produce a right institution of life, in all its relations, and because they were necessary to produce it. The baptismal and sacramental rites, the outward marks and bonds of Christian fellowship, and every thing that combines to make up the visible church, were established in order to keep man's practical duty clearly and constantly before him, by solemnly and forcibly reminding him of it, at regular intervals. Their whole purpose and drift appear in the affectionate injunction of Christ to his disciples, at the first Lord's supper: "This do in remembrance of me."

But all these things, though indispensable, and wisely ordained, and perfectly adapted as means to an end, are not the end itself, and should never be mistaken for it. The heart was not designed to rest in them, but to look beyond them to their result. Unless this is done, their substance and vitality are eaten out; they lose their meaning, and become powerless and lifeless shows. The end aimed at is, plainly, to teach and enable man to *act* right, in all his relations, and in his whole capacity as a mortal and immortal being. And as actions spring and receive their character from motives, and motives from the moral condition of the heart, the whole system of means aims at the spiritual nature, either immediately, as in the revelation of vital truth, and the operations of the Spirit, or through the senses, as in the rites and external

requirements of the visible church. The means and appliances of grace, and their use and application, then, do not constitute religion, but are only the causes and methods of producing it. It differs from them, in the same manner that the work differs from the agent who performs it, from the instruments which were employed in producing it, and from the mode in which they were applied. Religion is an *act* of the soul. It is the theory of duty carried into effect. Hence it is, that every act of man may become religious, by linking it with high conscientious motives; and this, in truth, is the aim and effect of Christianity, which it accomplishes, by intimately connecting the sense of duty to God with every act whatever of the daily life; including, of course, every thought and aspiration of the mind. When this is effectually and perfectly accomplished, the end of Christianity is fulfilled, the whole result of the complicated system of means and influences is performed. It is, therefore, essentially and fundamentally practical; and as philosophy, in its more extended sense, is that portion of universal truth which is practical, that is, applicable to human conduct, the philosophical nature of substantial Christianity is evident.

Again: this important truth, of the philosophical character of Christianity, appears in the fact, that though it operates by laws peculiar to itself, as must be the case with every agency of distinct individuality, those laws, or modes of action, are general and uniform.

This is a necessary element of the philosophical type of Christianity, as it shows that it harmonizes and deals with the immutable facts and reasons, which arise from the fixed relations of things, in distinction from a capricious, unconnected, and unreliable method of operation.

No department of nature can be reduced to a science, or system, unless the phenomena it offers to investigation be controlled by general and uniform laws. Hence, in constructing a system of knowledge, it is indispensable to collect and examine a great number of facts pertaining to it, for the purpose of ascertaining the principles concerned in their production and nature. When this is accomplished, they are arranged, like with like, and classified under rules which have been found to have a general application; these are again divided into such of a subordinate kind as regulate specific differences. When unknown facts, belonging to the same branch of inquiry, arise, they are referred, by virtue of their essential properties, to the general rules, and, by virtue of their more particular features, to the specific and secondary heads. Knowledge thus systematized constitutes science. The benefit of science, it is needless to say, is of the most important kind. It makes knowledge available, not only in determining the properties and nature of new facts, by the application of the laws deduced from previous ones, but also in placing it under the prompt and intelligent con-

trol of the mind, by giving it a distinct and permanent form, and by arranging it in concert with the principles which govern the association of ideas. But science rests upon uniformity, which could not exist without fixed and general laws.

The human mind exhibits the same essential traits and movements in every situation of life. By virtue of this uniformity, appearing to thoughtful men in their study of mental phenomena, the states and affections of the mind come to be arranged and classified under general heads. The system grew, with deeper and more accurate investigation, until it was reduced to a regular science. Mental philosophy is based on the fundamental fact, that the human mind is governed by uniform and general laws. Without this, it could not exist as a science; as, without uniformity, there could be no science.

Accordingly, when one examines a reliable system of mental philosophy, he does not suppose that he is studying the properties and modes of any one mind, or definite number of minds, but of the human mind universally. The same mind, which consciousness teaches to constitute himself, and tells to be more or less accurately and fully described, he naturally generalizes to the species universally. He supposes every man alike to be governed by the same laws of thought and desire. His knowledge of those who come within the range of his observation and reading, corrobo-

rates the belief, and he does not for a moment doubt that the same psychological features distinguish every member of the human family.

Such being the nature of man, it follows, that a practical system of religion, designed to be applied to every act of the soul, and actually applying, as universally as does Christianity, must harmonize accurately with the nature of the soul, and therefore operate by fixed and uniform methods. This is a necessary quality, without which it could have no efficacy over mankind, as a class.

Christianity is framed upon this basis of generic uniformity. It views all men as being in the same natural state, as possessing a nature, controlled by the same laws of thought and desire, of hope and fear. It speaks to the world in one voice of promise and denunciation, of invitation and threatening, of persuasion and command. It holds out like motives to all, of love and terror, of a heaven to gain, and a hell to escape, of a Saviour's atoning sacrifice, and the "wrath of God revealed from heaven against all ungodliness." It offers like means of sanctifying and saving grace to all, and the same great agency of the Holy Spirit performs the work of regeneracy in every case. This point, however, will become plainer, by a more particular consideration of it.

Wherever there is a condition, that is, wherever a given end is made to depend on something else, so that it cannot be produced without it, there

arises the conception of a general and uniform law, or mode of acting. A cause is always a condition, but, let it be remarked, a condition is not necessarily, a cause. One thing may be an indispensable condition to another, and yet, not the cause of it; for example, life is an indispensable condition to spiritual religion, yet the mere fact, that a man is alive, cannot put him in possession of it. A condition, however, is always a mode of acting, and, if indispensable, gives rise to a general and uniform law. It is by such laws that Christianity operates.

This appears, first, from the existence of means of grace; as such, they constitute the conditions of it. If it be proved, that religion is never, in any case, produced in the heart, excepting when these fixed conditions are fulfilled, it will follow that, so far, Christianity operates in a uniform and systematic manner.

The great preparative, directive, and operative influence concerned in bringing the heart into a state of religion, is the Holy Spirit. But his regenerative and sanctifying power is never applied, excepting in concurrence with the ordinary means of grace. This plainly appears in the fact, that among those who have never heard of evangelical truth, there never has occurred a known instance of evangelical conversion. And if there could remain any doubt, it is emphatically settled by St. Paul: "How shall they believe in him of whom

they have not heard? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

In the operation of the Holy Spirit, then, there is a condition, namely: the presence and parallel agency of the Bible, and as this condition is invariable and universal, there results a general and uniform mode of acting.

If the word of God forms the condition to the operation of the Holy Spirit, then it is also to the work of regeneration and sanctification, which he performs. As, therefore, it is, in this sense, the primary and fundamental condition of the birth and growth of vital religion, the present question is, whether that end is ever found to be accomplished, without the condition being first fulfilled, or which is the same thing, whether the law, which here arises, is general and uniform? The answer, with respect to the birth of personal religion, is determined beyond a doubt by the foregoing consideration, namely: that afforded by the situation of the heathen, or such of them as have never heard of Revelation.

So long as they remain in ignorance of the Gospel, from the period when they first lost the knowledge of the true God, until it is proclaimed to them, they continue in the darkness and corruption of their natural state "without God, and without hope in the world."

Of all the thousand human hearts that throb in the bosom of a people who have not received the

written word, there is not one that is blessed with the light and balm of heaven. Of all the numberless thoughts and desires, hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, wild aspirations, and deep moral cravings that crowd and agitate their untutored minds, not one has been imbued with vitality or received the all-important direction, by the application of pure evangelical truth. They live, and die, and sink into the grave without one ray to lighten their dark pathway of life. If it were consistent with the fixed and general laws by which the unsearchable wisdom of God has seen fit, as, on the whole, best, to carry on the government of the world, there is no reason to doubt that all men, and all races, would have received the same inestimable opportunity and means of salvation. But He has seen fit to govern mankind by uniform and established methods. He has constructed a vast remedial system, every part of which bears a certain and immutable relation to every other part, and to the whole design; and the entire structure is bound together by irrefragable chains of causation, which He has woven and set with His mighty hand. To certain ends He has joined certain means, to certain effects He has joined certain causes, with immutable and adamant links which cannot be pulled asunder. Man, in his short-sightedness, may not be able to penetrate into the reasons upon which the startling phenomena of the divine government are based; but God, whose all-compre-

hending eye embraces all the relations and possibilities of things, has framed His great schemes according to an unerring and unfathomable wisdom. In the scheme of salvation it was fixed, that vital religion should depend upon a knowledge of revelation as an invariable condition, and, accordingly, it is seen, that even in what might be called the most urgent and appealing exigencies, the established law operates with the most general and inflexible uniformity. The testimony to this truth furnished by heathen nations, is confirmed by that of such as have received the word of God. In every case of conversion, however various may be the circumstantial history, the principles involved, the inward affections, the prominent and characteristic features of the process are essentially and fundamentally the same.

If all genuine Christians should meet together, and give an account of the states and affections of mind through which each passed during regeneracy, it would, therefore, appear that all were influenced by the same agencies, were affected in like manner, and passed through the same great stages of spiritual change. But this could by no means be, unless Christianity operated upon the heart by fixed and certain methods.

To the religious growth of the Christian there are placed similar conditions to those which are established to precede the "new birth." In every case spiritual advancement is the result of the ef-

fectual influence of the indwelling Spirit, sanctifying every circumstance and event both of the inner and external life, to the firmer establishment and fuller control of the Christian virtues. But, as in regeneration, the Holy Spirit never operates without the concurrent presence and testimonies of the word, so in progressive sanctification, it forms the greatest of all the agencies which he brings to bear upon the heart, and, in fact, every minor influence receives power and purpose from that which arises from the Bible. The circumstances and events in the life of a heathen, or an unregenerate man, whether of joy or sorrow, advantage or disadvantage, arise and pass away, without bringing the soul to a closer conformity and communion with God, whatever else may be their effect; but in the regenerated man, they are made tributary to the spiritual growth, by having their relations to the revealed truths of the word disclosed to the inner sense by the Holy Spirit. The Christian, and the man who is not a Christian, in the perusal of the Bible, read the same book. There are the same pages, the same words, the same ideas, the same great truths; but yet they read with far different eyes. The one sees a spirit, a harmony, a searching and intimate applicability to all the thoughts and affections of his nature, and a high and unquestionable authority to control them: the other has no further estimate of it beyond an intellectual truthfulness. The one merely sees, the

other both sees and feels. Whence arises this difference? It can be only explained by the operative influences of the Holy Spirit, not upon the book, for that must of course remain the same thing, but upon the capacity of the spiritual vision, giving it a deeper penetration and more comprehensive view. The moment a man experiences the regenerative change, the blind eyes are opened upon these new and deep relations which are disclosed to him by the Spirit. What was before dark, now becomes clear; what was once considered and put aside without substantial profit, now conduces to his spiritual enlargement; in like manner, as when a man in disease may eat the same substances as when in health: but in the one case they are not assimilated from derangement of the digestive organs. The fault lies not with the food, but with the digestion. When that is corrected, its functions are properly performed, and ease and vigour return. Health is preserved by a wise adaptation to the relations between the vital principle and nutritive substances, and by supplying such food whenever the declining energies demand it. Spiritual growth, or progressive sanctification, in like manner, depends upon the stated use of the means which were set, in the fixed relations of things, to promote it. Those means are the spiritual agencies which God furnishes to man in his Revelation.

It is a custom, among some Christians, to assem-

ble together, for the purpose of relating what has been their religious history since a given point of time, say the next previous meeting; and this is done for the common spiritual benefit of all who are present. In these accounts of individual conflict, there is not only much to strike and interest, but much that throws light upon the laws which appear in the mode of action of Christianity upon the heart.

With minor differences, arising from constitution, education, or habitude, and which give an individual cast of colouring, there is the same narrative of hope and fear, of defeat and victory, of despondency and joy, interwoven with a variety of incidents and circumstances connected with the particular relations of the parties. In every case where the conditions have been complied with; that is, where the means of grace have been faithfully employed, there have resulted spiritual light, and strength, and joy: wherever they were neglected, apathy and darkness took hold of the heart, and sunk it in despondency, perhaps in sin. Precisely, as it might strike one, as if they were a company of invalids who had met together to recount, for mutual benefit, by what means, and in what degrees, they were advancing towards recovery. Those who had punctually used the prescribed remedial agents, were animated with the enjoyments of returning health, and the pleasing hope of complete restoration; those who had not,

were groaning with the sharp pains of disease, and depressed with gloomy forebodings. In each case, where the conditions were fulfilled, the end was attained, and conversely. This proves that the government of God in spiritual, as it is in bodily, restoration, and, in fact, in every thing else, is general and uniform, or, that it proceeds by fixed and established laws. By virtue of the generic uniformity of the facts involved in the spiritual life and growth of the Christian, arising from the essential and characteristic sameness of the human mind in all its states and affections, those facts are capable of scientific arrangement, and classification, under general laws, in the same manner that the facts pertaining to the mind, generally, may be formed into a system or science of mental philosophy, or those, belonging to the vegetable kingdom, into that of botany. And, in point of fact, the Bible constitutes a manual of spiritual philosophy. When the student examines a system of the mind he does not expect to find a complete history of the human race, that is, of all that the mind has ever done, still less can he look for an account of all that it will do. The most that he can expect, will be to find a complete enumeration of the various laws, which satisfactorily explain the facts of individual and social history, with a statement of such a number of facts, as will suffice to illustrate and substantiate them.

The object of science is merely to put him in

possession of the fundamental laws of any branch of knowledge, and, if any facts are mentioned, it is only to fix those laws clearly and strongly in his mind. It is left for him to apply them to any event, either past, or presently occurring. So it is with the Bible. It does not furnish to each man a history of his life, in order to teach him what his duty is, in all the particular circumstances of his career. But it accomplishes this end, by affording a full system of general rules and laws, with a sufficient number of facts to illustrate them clearly, leaving it to each individual to apply them to the peculiar exigencies which may arise in his course through the world.

The Decalogue is but the bare statement of the fundamental and general laws, which regulate the whole duty of man, without illustration or explanation; and which yet have an immediate concern in all the numberless relations of life. They are involved in every circumstance, from the greatest to the minutest, which invests man as a moral agent. There is no act whatever, out of the myriads which have a character of right or wrong, but what can be arranged under one of those general laws, and, when so referred, ~~has~~ ^{have} its moral aspect determined decisively. The Sermon on the Mount, and, in fact, all the teachings of Christ respecting conduct, which included nearly all the words he uttered on earth, were designed to illustrate and enforce the Decalogue, by disclosing its

applicability to the spiritual world, and showing that every thought, and motive, and desire, as well as every external action, was to be arranged under it, and be morally determined by it. In short, the Decalogue consists of the ten great general laws, which lie at the foundation of the whole scheme and conception of duty, and under which every fact connected with man, as a moral agent, may be arranged, and classified, and determined.

The Bible contains these laws, stated with distinctness and precision, clearly explained and amplified in the parables, and conversations, and sermons of Christ, practically illustrated, in their social applicability, by the national history of the Jews, and, in their individual, by all scriptural biography. This fills up the conception of a full and perfect system of spiritual philosophy, faultless in all its parts, and infinitely more complete than any other science whatever. The question now is, upon what principle is the scientific nature of the Christian institution based? Unquestionably, it can only be based upon the generic uniformity of man in his spiritual qualities, and the consequent uniformity in the facts of his spiritual conflicts, exigencies, and wants. And this constitutes a proof that the birth and growth of religion in the heart proceeds by systematic and uniform modes of action.

A further proof of this truth arises from the manner, in which Christianity harmonizes with the various specific classes of human character.

In all that is essentially and fundamentally characteristic, man is the same being, in every variety of the race. He is constituted by the same elements, governed by the same laws, and possesses the same traits and properties. But, as the same elements constitute different forms of matter, by combining in diverse proportions, so the human character presents different shades, according to a preponderance, or depression, of particular qualities, or according to climate, and other external influences. These different grades of qualities, though more or less minute in themselves, constitute important peculiarities, and have an influence upon what may be called the whole result of character. Viewed in this ultimate effect, it is what constitutes the individuality of different classes of men.

These classes may be regarded as species of the same genus, and it will be found, upon reflection, that the specific differences, giving rise to these divisions of our race, are controlled by uniform general laws, extending equally to all that falls within their scope; that is, to all that belongs only to the respective species, and gives each its peculiarity. This appears from that consistency, which is observable in the actions of men and nations, and which leads us confidently to expect a course of conduct from one, which we would not expect from another. The preceding proof that the laws which control the birth and growth of spiritual re-

ligion are general and uniform, was founded on the adaptedness of Christianity, in its modes of action, to the generic uniformity of human nature; the present one rests upon the uniformity observable in its more specific forms. The church of God, both visible and invisible, embraces all classes of mankind. It extends from the snows of the north to the sands of the equator, including every type of national character, from the cultivated European to the untaught African; from the enthusiasm and repose of the Orientalist to the hardy and exposed prairie-life of the Indian hunter. It combines, with equal ease and power, with every cast of national character, yet leaving each as distinct and peculiar as formerly. So with individuals. It embraces the philosopher, the poet, the untutored, and the dull, the prudent and imprudent, the steadfast and the versatile, the visionary and the sober. It takes in the man of comprehensive mind as well as the feeble and narrow-minded, the hopeful and the melancholy, the open and the reserved. Yet it is an easy matter to refer a man, though thoroughly and truly reclaimed to God, to his specific class. There are strong-minded and weak-minded, prudent and imprudent, hopeful and pensive Christians. While one yields to his impulses, and carries them out with unthinking ardour; another will weigh every consideration, select his course deliberately, and pursue it with slow and patient coolness. While one exhibits a constant cheerfulness and buoyancy

of feeling, and seems ever to live in the open and joyous liberty of the Gospel; another presents a pensive piety, habitually looking on the darker side of things, and often distracting itself with doubts and fears. The heart of one lies open to the world with all its multitude of thoughts and feelings; another wraps himself in reserve, and forbids the eye of curiosity or sympathy to rest on the secrets of his bosom. One sends his thought habitually beyond the present scene to commune with great truths, and search deeply for the causes and reasons of things; another scarcely looks beyond the range of his business and duties, and passes through life in quiet and contented ignorance.

Whence is it, that though Christianity takes vital hold on every form of character, each man will still continue true to his specific class, and that, in all the words and actions of different classes of Christians, there is still preserved the peculiarities of their distinctive type? It can only arise from the fact that Christianity, in its modes of spiritual action, operates in conformity with the general and uniform laws which control the peculiarities of the several classes of men; which, of course, it could not do, unless it acted also in an established and uniform manner.

The practical nature of substantial Christianity, and the fact that its modes of action upon the heart proceed by fixed and uniform laws, systematically instituted and established by the all-wise God, to-

gether prove its philosophical character; for they prove that it deals with the realities of actual life, and deals with them by a method which accords with the settled and connected relations of things.

It remains now, to show the philosophical truthfulness, and excellence, of Christianity, as a system of poetical truth, and its power to promote the peace and happiness of man, when fully applied to the daily life.

But, in addition to a system, which joins in with the relations of actual life, man also requires, as an indispensable condition to his spiritual peace and comfort, the revelation of certain great truths, which shall satisfactorily settle the important and agitating questions, arising from some startling facts in his condition and destiny. Unless these questions be answered, it will be impossible for him to enjoy ease and quiet, though he may be in the possession of the completest system of practical truth. Hence the disclosures of Revelation, respecting these disquieting points, though not of an essentially practical nature, become practical, by their concurrent and indispensable influence, in bringing the mind to a state of peace, and thus preparing it to receive the full effect of what is strictly experimental. This may be plainly seen, by supposing that the heathen sages had struck out the entire system of Christian morality; and by further supposing, that, by some means, they had fastened it upon mankind with controlling, practical efficacy.

Though a salutary effect would be felt in all the relations of life, and the benefit of veracity, justice, benevolence, and love would appear in the concord of nations, and in the peace and happiness of every civil community, and domestic circle; yet man could not, by this sole influence, be brought at perfect peace with himself, unless he were a mere mortal. As an immortal being, destined to live for ever in another and higher state, possessed of accordant ideas of infinity and eternity, of a restless craving for the perfect and the unknown, and of great and undeveloped faculties, capable of indefinite improvement and investigation, it cannot but be, that a system, which furnishes no supply to the deep wants arising from these sources, will fail to reconcile him to himself, and leave him at inward ease. It would, therefore, be necessary, in order to accomplish the full aim of experimental truth, which of course includes spiritual peace, that such revelations be made as should settle the awful questions connected with eternity. The truths thus revealed, by virtue of their practical influence, come to be justly viewed as belonging, so far, to the same class as those of an essentially experimental nature.

When man looked upon his brother, yielding up his spirit amidst the strong agonies and convulsions of death, and felt that all human life was appointed to the same end, the dim, natural perception of his immortality, lying in the unexplored, dark depths

of his mind, in the form of unrealized aspirations, intimations, and instinctive reachings forth toward the infinite and perfect, begot upon the spectacle of death the most awful and agitating questions concerning the possibility of a dread hereafter. He might go forth to his business, or his enjoyments; he might wear a contented smile; he might fancy himself at ease; he might not even realize in his consciousness what might be the end toward which these deep workings tended. But far down, in the unfathomable and unlit regions of his nature, where all was dim, and vast, and strange, and unknown, there were awful doubts, and mighty hopes, and wild aspirations, like restless eagles, that had a frantic hunger to soar to the lofty heights where the sun was, and bathe their fierce eyes in his light; and would ever start upward with daring energy and a shriek of frenzied joy, but would return from the wide quest to furl their strong wings in weariness and despair, because there was no sun. Such were those excursive flights into the dim vastness of the future, which thought exhibits in the breathless doubts and wild hopes of ancient speculation.

To all this solemn conjecture, and stirring apprehension, and mounting but baffled aspiration, Christianity brings assurance and peace, and the fruition of great and unspeakable joy. The darkest and deepest region of the soul, where all that belongs to infinity dwells, is illuminated in its solemn and majestic beauty, and the eagles of the

mightiest thought may soar, and wheel, and float in the farthest depths of the empyrean, and quaff the light of the brightest suns of heaven.

Again: even if the eternal duration of the soul, in a higher state, were revealed as an assured fact, man would still be in ignorance of the nature of God, of his relations to Him, and consequently of the condition, with respect to knowledge and happiness, in which he would find himself placed beyond the grave. The obvious iniquities of the world, and the unexplained suffering which abounds in it, together with the mystery and terror which surrounds the idea of the infinite and omnipotent spirit, would give birth to the most gloomy suspense and frightful fears. The fearful signs of the moral and physical debasement of the human race, and its consequent woes, and the appearance of terrific severity in the government of the world, were sufficient to produce the belief among some of the wisest of the ancients, that this life was appointed to be a state of suffering, and to produce, among unenlightened tribes, the most appalling rites and observances, which could only arise from the conviction, that God hates his creatures, and takes delight in their misery. Whence does this spring? Plainly from a deep consciousness of impurity and unworthiness, and from the unexplained mysteries of providence, which seems to the natural eye to deny all sympathy to man, in the sweep of its crushing wheel.

Without light upon these most momentous of the relations of the soul, the revelation of its immortality would but serve to open to its view a new world of vague and terrific apprehension. But, upon these dark sources of agonizing doubt, the illuminations of Christianity centre with peculiar lustre and power. The revelation of the consuming holiness of the Deity, is accompanied with the joyful declaration that "God is love." The disclosure of the spiritual debasement of human nature, and its consequent unacceptableness in the eye of God, is made the source of a deeper gratitude and love, by His provision of an atonement, which makes that nature the object of His forgiveness and tender care. Christianity explains the dark problems of providence. It shows that a wise and tender parent holds the reins of universal government, and conducts all things, great and small, to the completion of his great and benevolent designs. To fill up the measure of beneficence, it furnishes the remedial agencies by which the soul is brought and preserved in harmony with itself and with God, and prepared to make death itself but a triumphant entry to a happiness which is perfect and unending.

In this manner Christianity not only removes the painful and unsatisfied doubts of the future, which would effectually disturb the action of a system of simply experimental truth, supposed to be practicable of itself, but it brings the mighty in-

fluence of eternity to bear in recommending and enforcing it. Man is thus set at peace with respect to a future state of being, and prepared to feel the full force and benefit of the Christian morality, as it applies to him in this world. View him in any station of life, and inquire what inward state of feeling could arise to mar his peace and happiness: then, if it appears that a faithful application of the Christian code of ethics will remove such a state, and establish one of an opposite moral cast and tendency, it will be proved that that code harmonizes perfectly with his inward welfare. For example: his peace and happiness would be disturbed, if he were discontented with his condition, and sighed for that of a more fortunate neighbour whom he may conceive to be more abundantly supplied with the goods of life. But Christianity would here interpose and banish this unhappiness; for it teaches him to be satisfied and grateful for his lot, as that which providence assigns, and with sober and cheerful contentment to pursue the duties of his peculiar station and avocation.

Again: he may have his feelings of anger, and thirst for revenge excited, by some insult either fancied or real. This no doubt would be able not only to disturb his peace, but really to put him on the rack. But here also does Christianity appear like an angel of light, robed in the garments of love, and pours forgiveness and reconciliation in the heart recently torn by the eager vindictiveness

of hate. Would ambition fix its wild eye upon the throne of fame or power, and pursue it with headlong madness through the blood and groans of human misery, Religion calms the monster, and fetters him with chains stronger than brass. Does envy, or jealousy, or malice strike their fancy, Religion extracts it and pours balm into the wound. Does avarice, or lust, or pride threaten the soul with desolation and unrest, Religion subdues them, and substitutes the mild reign of moderation and humility. And thus we might go through with the entire list of human passions, which, when uncontrolled, distort and rend the heart by their fierce restlessness, or poison the gushing fountains of feeling with the bitterness of gall.

In every case they yield to the morality of the Bible, and give way to virtues of a directly opposite nature. Contentment, the forgiveness of injuries, humility, and a settled moderation, the result of self-control, are the products of the Christian morality. From the constitution of human nature, these states of mind necessarily produce inward peace, and shed a glow of mild satisfaction upon the heart. The happiness of man, therefore, considered in his relation to himself, cannot be maintained excepting in accordance with the rules of Christian morality, and naturally ensues when those rules are faithfully observed. Whatever produces the peace and happiness of the indivi-

dual, secures, when generalized, the peace and happiness of the whole race. But since the inward states of the mind depend upon, and result, either directly, or remotely, from its outward connections, a more particular and extended consideration of the benefit of the Christian morality in its application to man in his relations to his fellow-man, will more clearly illustrate the point to be established.

The characteristic and fundamental principle of Christian ethics is charity, or evangelical love, which is the love of all men generally, in distinction from particular attachments. Christ divides the law into two classes, the first pertaining to our duties to God, and the second to those due to our fellow-men, which latter forms the substance and field of morality. That there is no third class, devoted to what we ^{are} ~~are~~ ourselves, arises from the above-mentioned fact, that the states and affections of the mind proceed and receive their character, from its external relations. If they are well and wisely fulfilled, inward satisfaction results; if they be neglected, as in thoughtlessness and indifference, disproportion and ultimate discontent are the consequences; if they be outraged, as in ungoverned passion, the mind is violently torn and disordered.

We are taught, from the lips of the Saviour, that love is the foundation and fulfilment of the whole law, the comprehensive, yet simple, princi-

ple, which includes all its requirements, and embraces, explains, and fulfils the entire range of duty. The morality of the Bible must therefore be considered with respect to this essential feature. It is set forth by Christ, condensed into this general law: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

If this law governed man, in all his relations to his race, what would be the natural and necessary effect upon society? Suppose, first, that it had full sway in the widest of these relations, that which regards the whole human family. Benevolence would assume an enlarged and comprehensive form. It would be limited by no sectional or national prejudices. It would select its field of action by no fastidious rules of taste or convenience. Wherever it was most needed, wherever most good could be done, would be the sphere in which it would most delight to operate. Plans of salutary influence would be formed and prosecuted, which would extend beyond the bounds of one's country, would travel our wide seas, and spread knowledge and peace among a people, perhaps, on the opposite side of the globe. This would be the effect of evangelical love, for it is the effect which it is now actually producing in Christian missionary enterprises. These benevolent schemes stand forth as the grand visible index of that wide love for the species, which it is the peculiar glory of Christianity to produce and sustain. And this earth does not afford a spectacle of greater moral

sublimity than that of one people diffusing knowledge and happiness among another, perhaps, in a different hemisphere, and through the medium of other tongues. Now, generalize the view, and suppose this principle to operate in every human breast. It is plain that the moral aspect of the world, considered as divided into distinct tribes and nations, would undergo a thorough and most beneficial change. All international questions would be adjusted in peace and good feeling. Governments would not exhaust their subjects with taxations, and then exhaust the revenues arising from them, in supporting costly armaments and works of defence. Foreign wars would cease to blight the flower of population, and work desolation both at home and abroad. Ships of war would be divested of their destructive appendages, and would unfurl their sails to swell the commerce of the world. Armies would dissolve, and soldiers be released from the profane ribaldry of the camp, and from the sanguinary honours of the battle-field. Revenues would be applied to establish improvements of a wide and permanently beneficial influence, and nations, which enjoyed the blessings of enlightenment, would devise and prosecute schemes to elevate to their own advantageous position, those which occupied a lower grade. War would cease to be a necessary art; strife and prejudice would vanish, and all the na-

tions would tranquilly repose under the "white wing of peace."

This seems like a vision of Utopia, and would indeed be, if expected to arise from merely earthly agencies; but it is a matter of sober reality, that Christianity tends to produce such fruit, and would, of necessity, produce it under universal obedience to the law: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Consider next what would be the effect of the law of love upon man, in his social and domestic relations. There could, of course, exist no enmity or acrimony between sects and parties. Men of different opinions in religion and politics, would take no pleasure in witnessing and triumphantly holding up to view each other's supposed errors and imperfections. The narrow, prying, carping spirit of fault-finding, which indefatigably searches for evil, and if it can find none, distorts and colours uncertain facts to its mean purpose, and then publishes them to the world as a proof of its superior wisdom and sanctity, and of a brother man's weakness or wickedness, would disappear wholly from the political and theological world. In place of this, men would amicably "agree to differ," and what seems almost incredible, would habitually take pleasure in searching for, and honouring all that was praiseworthy in the character and life of others. There could be no strife, nor animosity, no insults, nor injuries, no bitter taunts, nor blast-

ing inuendos, nor petty vexatious words; for this is contrary to the hypothesis, namely: that every man loved his neighbour as himself. The passions would retire to their appropriate sphere, under the authority of conscience; and the genial affections of the heart would be left to act in freedom and peace. The various professions and pursuits of life, and denominations of belief, would harmonize perfectly, and confer mutual benefit. Social intercourse would call forth the Christian virtues in constant exercise, and domestic happiness would be complete: for there could be no cause for discord, or anger, or vexation, or even of irascibility, or apathy, where love was the reigning law. Peace and happiness, therefore, must, from the constitution of human nature, be the result of the universal exercise of the Christian morality. Hence, its philosophical excellence is apparent: for it is found to be perfectly adapted to supply all the moral wants of man, as a social being, and to conduct him to the highest and fullest welfare of his nature.

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CHAPTER IX.

Literature.

THE relations of Christianity to Poetry and Philosophy will be more fully developed and illustrated, if its tendencies are considered in their ultimate, embodied effect upon literature.

The world tends mightily to analysis. This forms the proof, and characteristic feature of mental progress. Mankind had been long enough in ignorance of the constituent principles, and, therefore, the true nature of the objects and agencies which surround life, and control it for good or evil. The view of nature, as she stood before the eye in all her unviolated loveliness and grandeur, was promotive of many of the highest traits of character and mind. Earnestness and poetry, could not but develope abundantly, under an intimacy so close, and direct, with her influences and aspects. But superstition, and the vague terror of signs, and wonders, and portents, found a wide place in the early mind ; and what was still more important, the arts, necessary to the comfort and peace of life, remained locked up with the unknown properties of matter.

It was indispensable to human advancement, that physical forms, as well as received opinions, should be separated into their elements, and under-

go a deep and severe inquiry. The mind, once started in this direction, with the assistance of an improved system of investigation, made wonderful progress. Science took the lead, in the intent search for truth, with the toiling patience indispensable to accuracy and fidelity. The pursuit led from the most obvious facts, to the mystical glooms and sacred privacies of nature. Hidden forms were brought from the deep repose of ages to the piercing light, and subjected with those which were commonly apparent, to the searching point and dividing edge of the knife.

The useful arts received a strong and novel impulse. The serviceable resources of nature were laid under human command. Manufactories sprung up plentifully, and issued almost every article, which could anticipate the requirements of want and taste. Comfort, convenience, and refined luxury, represented by the exponent term wealth, became the goal of universal inquiry and effort.

The oscillations of society resemble those of a plummet, drawn widely from its perpendicular, and then left to move freely; in each vibration passing the line, in which it will finally rest. The human mind was withdrawn to a great distance from the centre of truth in former times. The impulse, imparted by science, projected it in the proper course to its point of ultimate destination. It not only reached that point, but rushed on to the opposite extreme, and it still hangs in wide deviation from

its appointed goal. But the reaction must come, sooner or later, and each vibration will grow successively less, until the social pendulum settles in peaceful rest.

The existing extreme does not consist in the extent to which the agencies of scientific inquiry are made to reach; for truth cannot be too widely or severely investigated. It appears in the spirit of narrow utilitarianism, which looks with skepticism, or suspicion, or contempt, upon every thing which does not subserve some physical advantage, and which confines inquiry only to objects of the latter stamp. The fault of the age is, not that it knows too much, but too little, and the most unpromising feature is, that it does not suspect its own ignorance. Scientific analysis works at the foundation of the great social change, which has latterly occurred in the condition of mankind. The rapid and wonderful improvements it accomplishes, wherever it is set at work, proves it to be the appointed agent in the discovery of truth. It has performed an inestimable work for man, and will yet perform a vast deal more. In all that belongs to human knowledge, it can never be carried too far. In metaphysics, as well as matter, its employment, so far as it has been made to reach, has been followed by the most striking results. If faithfully and patiently pursued, it will reduce the laws and phenomena of mind, and all discoverable abstract truth, to systems as clear

and ample, as those beginning to be exhibited in physical science. The material world was once invested, by ignorance and superstition, with an unapproachable inviolability, but analysis laid it bare to the human eye and hand: the world of spirit will one day, in like manner, receive its glance of inquiry, and be clearly and intelligibly revealed. What it has accomplished amidst the most unpromising and forbidding gloom, it can perform again, in all that is permitted to be discovered and known to man.

The present contracted views of utility have not, therefore, followed necessarily from strict analysis, but from its limitation to visible and tangible things, which resulted from the tendency of the mass of mankind to go beyond a wise medium. There are things in the invisible world of mental affections, produced by unseen, yet, nevertheless, felt and actual influences, which claim the analytical examination of the mind. Analysis indirectly exerted an injurious influence upon poetry and the liberal arts, but only because it was confined to the ^{visible} physical creation. When it is extended also to the spirit-like influences of nature, and the modes in which they affect the mind, it must of necessity presuppose and explain the deep charms and efficient power of poetry. That it is capable of such application, and with the most cheering results, no one can read the works of Goethe and doubt. Considering analysis from this point of

view, it cannot be supposed that it produced, by necessary consequence, the prevalent narrow conceptions of utility. On the contrary, when extended to its legitimately universal application to all existences, it must evoke a broad and true utilitarianism, which acknowledges the dignity of every thing that affects the soul, and the use and importance of understandingly determining the nature and laws of every such influence.

But, let it be carefully remarked, that however great may be the benefit of analysis, when applied in perfection, it is incapable of producing the poetic affection. On the contrary, it constitutes that state of the mind, which, while it continues, excludes the perception of poetry. Yet a high cultivation, and profound application of it, is coincident with every performance in the liberal arts, and for this reason, that the perfectness and excellence of combination in works of art, are in direct ratio with the closeness and accuracy of the analysis of their constituent parts. The skilful union of parts plainly constitutes the excellence of any designed combination, and this as plainly depends upon correct analysis, as essential to accurate adjustment. The execution of the final finish of expression demands the most refined perception of the ratio of constituents, which of course could not exist without a minute separation of parts in the mind. This shows the perfect harmony of the mental faculties, and the necessity of their union in excellence, to

form the true poet. It also shows the reciprocal dependance of the intellectual powers, and the lightning-like rapidity with which the mind passes through its varied modes of action.

Literature, as the expression of prevalent habits of thought, must receive its stamp and direction from the spirit of the age ; and, therefore, however friendly a wide and unrestricted analysis must be to poetry and the fine arts, there must first be an impulse exerted upon the mind towards them, in order that analysis be turned fully to bear upon them. The question now is, what is the influence which will produce this salutary reaction upon existing modes of thought ?

That influence will arise from the Bible ; poetry will regain its legitimate rank and power through the intermediate agency of religion. When Christianity spreads to a certain extent over society, and takes hold upon the heart of men, to a certain degree of earnest power, the revival of poetry is inevitable. A short consideration of this point will establish it beyond a rational doubt.

Religion confessedly exerts a direct and mighty power to place present interests, as commonly understood, in subordination to an unseen and intangible good. It is, moreover, necessary, in order to maintain it vitally in the heart, to keep this relative estimate of time and eternity constantly in view, and to act upon it habitually. It unceasingly teaches that the objects presented by earth are un-

worthy of the highest affections of man: nay, it pronounces them to be "weak and beggarly," and invites all of thought and desire that belongs to human immortality to go forth and rest upon things of a far different nature. By fixing in man a constantly acting belief that he is to live for ever, and that the earthly life constitutes but a brief moment in the whole duration of the soul, all things, merely belonging to this world, sink, of necessity, into comparative insignificance.

Consider, in connection with this view, that religion establishes a daily and habitual communion with the Spirit, who is, emphatically, and by excellence, the pure spirit of the universe; and that, in order to this converse, the eye of the soul must be reverently and utterly withdrawn from all material views, and purged to a degree of inexpressible visual delicacy. Again: consider that the practice of religion requires and exercises, in the greatest, as well as smallest, matters of life, the most refined sensibilities of love, justice, generosity and pity. Reflect, further, that the subjects of some of the noblest performances in the fine arts were furnished by the Bible, and how naturally the aspirations of religion and the highest flights of poetry unite. Add, finally, that there are great truths of revelation, whose grandeur must always enchain the soul with the might of mystery, and that the Bible leads to the conclusion that the life beyond the grave is purely spiritual.

When these facts are viewed together, it is not possible to doubt, that religion tends to produce a state of the mind most favourable to the poetic affection. The result of its effects is, to institute a peculiar refinement of sensibility, by active piety, and a deep earnestness, by bringing the soul in direct communion with the Great Spirit of the universe. Hence it is, that earnest Christians, as a class, exhibit so little concern in the things pertaining to the present life, and seem habitually to dwell in a spirituality that appears almost like a separate state of being.

Let the facts afforded by these considerations be generalized. Suppose pure and earnest religion to extend, as it certainly will, over society. Is it not evident, that so soon as it "apprehends" and impregnates a certain number of minds, there must follow a decided revulsion from the prevalent spirit of worldliness, and of narrow utilitarianism, which is its offspring? An enlarged spirituality will then ensue, which will develope in accordance with the most improved systems of investigation, and which will possess a constant balance in the wide and permanent achievements, and stable nature of physical science. This change must necessarily involve poetry and the fine arts, and, it is not too much to say, that they will, from their new and high alliance, exhibit developments of a totally superior cast to any thing now existing. Poetry will then, like man, find a saviour in religion; for it can never die while the Bible lives.

The end of Christianity is to bring all that constitutes man in harmony with universal Order, and this can be accomplished only by giving each human susceptibility its just share of influence and exercise. The spirit, which in any era of mental progress, neglects and despises a class of influences which affect thought and feeling, is proved by this rule to be contrary to wide and correct views of utility. Hence, also, it may be seen how fallacious it is to decide upon the final destiny and complexion of the mind, from the aspect it presents to view in any one stage of its progress. For example: it has been urged, that a high degree of cultivation tends exclusively to perfection in the physical and exact sciences, and in the art of criticism, but is hostile to poetry and the liberal arts. This opinion is based only upon the prevalent spirit of the existing age, and is, therefore, narrow and false.

There can be no rational doubt that Christianity produces an effect, which, when reaching a certain degree of prevalence, must, of necessity, work a decided change upon the taste and aspect of the times.

To fix, therefore, upon the present period, and decide every thing relating to the capabilities and aspects of mind, by its specific features, must go on the presumption that the present is the last era of literature; which is to disregard, most unphilosophically, the plain and powerful tendencies of Christianity.

These tendencies furnish presages of the most inspiring kind, with respect to literature. They establish the belief that it will one day assume a form which will combine the perfection, both of the solid and brilliant exhibitions of mind. The perception of the perfect congruity of every human endowment, and their reciprocal benefit, each to each, will effectually point the mind to just methods of improvement. Each faculty of perception and thought will be estimated in proportion to its importance in itself, and also in its relation to every other, and to the whole combined, harmonious result of all. Imagination will cast a mantle of grace over the skeleton meagerness of reason, and receive in return an infusion of precision and strength.

By virtue of these mutual bestowments, the cold, quaint, plodding aspect of the one, will be exchanged for an elastic tread, and a supple and majestic form; the dilute phosphorescence and yielding frailty of the other will disappear in the clear firm brilliancy of the diamond. They will wander together in harmonious fellowship through the realms of truth, under compact, to view her multifold forms, with a single eye of justness; while one points out their nature and properties with accurate precision, the other will hold high and impassioned discourse upon those spirit-like influences which come with such deep power to thrill and enchain the soul.

This union, in excellence, of the imaginative and reasoning powers, resulting in a combination of delicate perception, precision, beauty, and strength, has in all ages been necessary to constitute genius.

The master-works in letters, painting, and sculpture, to which the world turns with such emotions of fond veneration, issued naturally from an exquisite harmony of all the mental faculties. This condition of mind, embodied and expressed in literature, fills the idea of its perfection, and this is the end to which the tendencies of Christianity point and move.

Christianity is professedly designed to undo the debasement of human nature, and restore it to its original state of perfection. And we see, or can see if we choose, enough in its practical results, and particularly in a theoretical view of it, to be assured that if its tendencies were fully carried into effect, as they will one day be, it must, of necessity, accomplish the end for which it was framed and put into the world. As a system adapted to human conduct, the signally happy effects which would follow, if love were the universal law, prove it to be faultless: for love includes every virtue, and it is a matter of plain fact that virtue is the only principle which can secure the happiness either of society or individuals. If all that Christianity enjoins, with respect to conduct, were received and practised, the social condition of mankind would reach a point of absolute

perfection; and it will be remembered, that the only accurate mode of determining the merit of any system, is, to consider the nature of its results, upon the supposition that all its tendencies were carried into effect.

A view of the theory of Christianity will be followed by the belief, that it is without a blemish. Its perfect adaptation to the condition of man; its faultless adjustment to the laws and properties of the mind; its capability to work in the midst of active error, gradually to subdue that error, and, finally, to keep man steadfast in the perfection to which it has led him, cannot but produce the conviction, that it is the outbirth of a wisdom which is infinite.

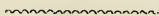
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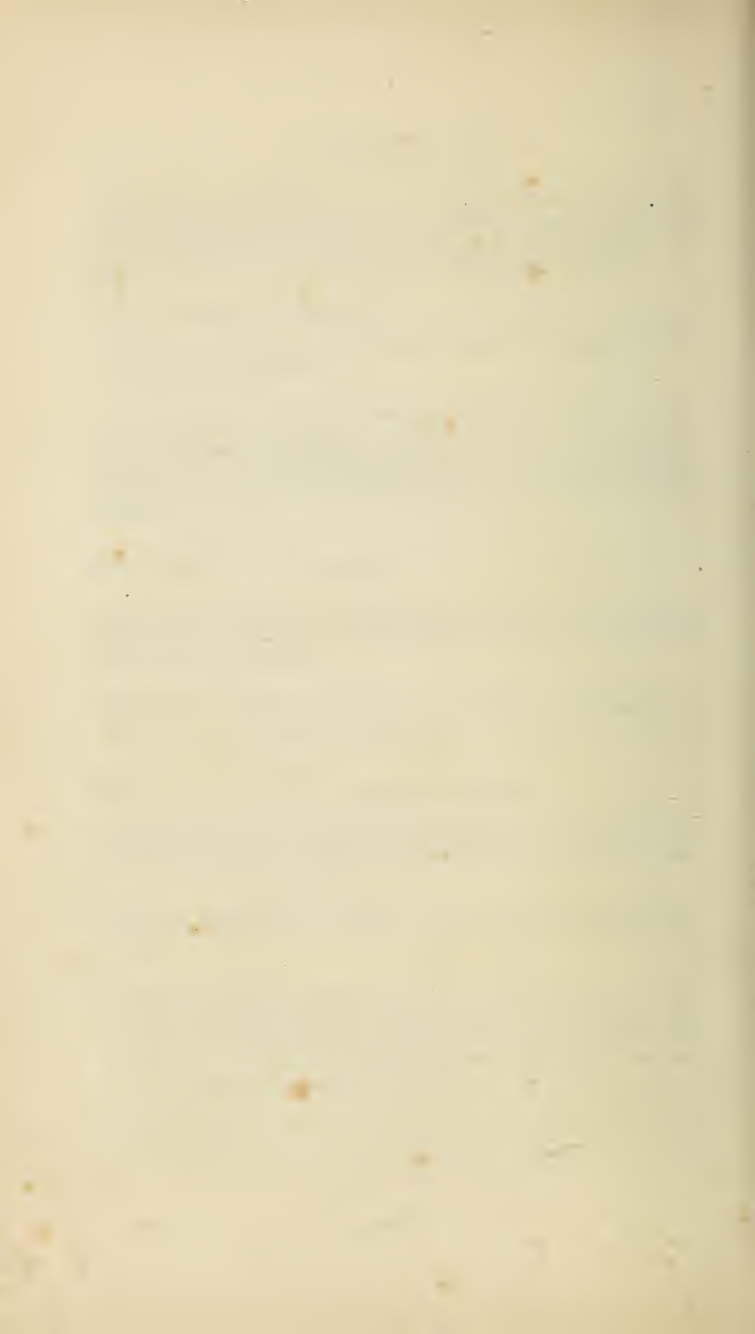
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